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John Hamilton

MEMORIALS

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN HAMILTON,

FREE WEST CHURCH, GLASGOW.

With a Biographical Sketch by

JOHN LAIDLAW, D. D

GLASGOW:
DAVID BRYCE & SON,
BUCHANAN STREET.
1881.

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To the

TWO CONGREGATIONS

OF LEVENSIDE, RENTON, AND FREE WEST CHURCH, GLASGOW.

WHICH ENJOYED AND APPRECIATED HIS LOVING MINISTRY,

THIS MEMORIAL VOLUME

IS DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THIS Volume has been prepared chiefly to meet the desire of members of the two Congregations, to which my brother-in-law successively ministered, and that of many private friends. It will be at once understood that none of these Remains were prepared for the press by the Author. With the exception of two papers re-printed from the "Reformed Presbyterian Magazine," none of them received even such revision from his own hand as the mere probability of their seeing the light might have secured for them.

The selection of Sermons has been determined very much by the state of the manuscripts, though some care has been taken to present specimens on a variety of pulpit themes. It opens with the discourse preached by Mr. Hamilton, as retiring Moderator of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, about a year before he was called into the Free Church; it closes with his last Communion

Sermon. The others are arranged as nearly as possible in the order of their delivery in Glasgow. Hearers will miss sermons they would wish to have seen in print. Indeed, those by which he is best remembered are not to be found among his MSS. in anything more than outline. His power as a preacher lay very much in the glowing utterances which seemed to pour forth almost spontaneously, when he had gone over the explanatory or doctrinal portions of a discourse—these alone being before him in writing. "I used to be especially delighted," says a brother whom he often assisted, "with the latter part of his sermon, *i.e.* the last fifteen or twenty minutes. He had certainly a wonderful command of nervous Saxon when he came to the application." It is precisely this portion of his discourses and this form of sermon which I have been unable to recover. The reader will therefore kindly note that the Sermons are reproduced with more than even the usual drawbacks of posthumous publication.

The "Papers" are given as indications of another side of his nature and of his powers, from that which made him attractive as an earnest and faithful preacher. They show the carefulness with which he formed his opinions on public questions, the deep interest he took in the progress of mankind, and especially of the Redeemer's

kingdom, the wise and true breadth, which was so well combined with firm evangelical principle.

In the Biographical Sketch I am much indebted to notes which have reached me from various friends while I was putting together these brief reminiscences. It will be obvious why, in seeking to present some outline of his character and life, I should avail myself of the words of others, rather than trust what might have seemed the too partial pen of one so nearly related to him.

I have to record my thanks to my friend Professor Binnie, Aberdeen, for his kind assistance in revising the sheets.

In the hope that this little volume may preserve some echoes of a true testimony for Jesus, some fragrance of a useful and self-forgetting life, and thus help to carry on the work he loved, while it transmits some likeness of the worker, I commit it to Him whose coming shall try all our work, and by whose blessing alone it can bring forth fruit.

J. L.

ABERDEEN, *20th May*, 1881.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, - - - - - - - xi

SERMONS—

I. The True Source of Spiritual Joy, - - 1

II. The Tolerance of the Gospel, - - - 18

III. The Efficacy of the Word, - - - - 32

IV. Nehemiah's Practical Piety, - - - 49

V. Jehu's False Zeal, - - - - - 65

VI. The Atonement: Some Evidences of its Efficacy, - - - - - - - - 82

VII. The Last Judgment, - - - - - 100

VIII. Spiritual Strength, - - - - - 123

IX. The Guidance of the Eye, - - - - 138

X. Christian Courage, - - - - - 153

XI. The Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax, - 162

XII. Christ Preparing a Place for Us, - - 177

PRESENT-DAY PAPERS—

I. Christianity and the Age, - - - - 199

II. Superstition and Rationalism, - - - 223

III. Creeds and Creed-Subscription, - - - 241

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

JOHN HAMILTON was born at Stranraer, in May, 1830, of parents who were members of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation there under the ministry of the elder Dr. William Symington, afterwards so well-known in Glasgow and indeed throughout the Christian world. This denominational connection gave colour to the whole life of the subject of our sketch. His forefathers on both sides had for generations been Covenanters. Among his mother's immediate progenitors there had been a Covenanting minister of the name of Martin, whose labours began in Ireland, and ended in America. During the early months of his infant life, there went forth from the house where he was born, his mother's brother, the Rev. James Brown, to be pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation at Dumfries. The record of James Brown's brief but bright and loving ministry was written in 1836 by his much

attached friend the Rev. James M'Gill, then of Hightae, now of Bournemouth. This little volume carried the savour of the young Dumfries pastor's memory into many homes throughout the denomination to which he belonged. Any one who knows how that little "Cameronian" church, with its congregations scattered over the more southerly counties of Scotland, had much the character of a clan or kinship as well as of a Christian community, will be aware that the name of their able and beloved ministers, such as the Symingtons, Goolds, and Rowatts, were "household words" in the families of the people, and that the memory of sainted young pastors like James Brown, Gavin Rowatt, and Andrew Halliday, was a kind of fostering inspiration to growing lads in those families who were shaping their course towards the pulpit. This was intensified in John Hamilton's case by the more immediate connection now alluded to, and by the influence of his own home.

Samuel Hamilton, the father, had been along with James Brown one of the group of deeply pious young men who gathered with delight round the remarkable ministry of William Symington from its opening in 1819. "They were accustomed to meet together, particularly on Sabbath mornings, for prayer and mutual improvement. During the summer after their intimacy commenced, the Sabbath's

sun scarcely ever rose upon them in bed. They had a secret retreat in the fields, called Bethel, where they read the word of God, and poured out their hearts before the Hearer of prayer." The memorial volume here quoted contains more than one specimen of the truly Christian correspondence of these youths. But over the household whose foundations were laid amid these pious influences a cloud of affliction descended. When the subject of our sketch was about nine years of age, the health of the father was suddenly prostrated by a series of nervous shocks which rendered him an invalid for the rest of his days, and at once brought about his retirement from the business in which he was engaged. Being the eldest child and the only boy in a family of four, the care of whose education fell thus almost entirely on the mother, John Hamilton was necessarily brought early into a share of her responsibility. Of that mother, Rev. J. M'Dermid, of Glasgow, her brother's college friend and his successor at Dumfries, writes: "If James Brown was cordial and noble in his nature Mrs. Hamilton was no less so. We became all at once friends and continued so to the end of her days. The impression she first produced was deepened by further intercourse. Indeed I was often astonished at the extent of her reading, at the susceptibility of her mind, and at the lively and exuberant manner in

which she could convey the substance of a book, which she evidently not only had read, but had made a part of herself."

These influences did not at once become apparent in the character of the boy. From the changed circumstances of his home, it became necessary, indeed, that he should close his school-life early. But it was not till some years after school-days were done that his mind awoke. In this respect he resembled his uncle. And indeed the career of the two was noticeably similar throughout. There was in both the same light-heartedness in boyhood—a boyhood spent by both on the sweet shores of Loch Ryan—the same love of boats in those early years rather than of books—and the wakening up of both, at about the same age, to intellectual and spiritual activity. Then later on the same serious, persevering course of student-life so familiar in the history of Scottish preachers—with its school-teaching in summer and hard college work in winter—the same quiet, cheerful persistence till the end is gained. The parallel is more than a coincidence, for the example of the uncle was constantly before the mind of the nephew, and distinctly helped to form his character and shape his course.

At what time the awakening took place, which dispelled the carelessness of childhood and kindled the new light of purpose in the youth, I am not

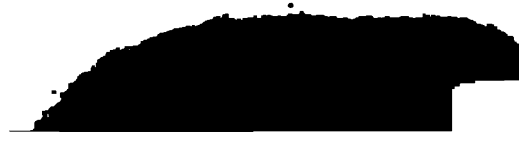
able to state with precision. There was probably more than one dawning. At about the age of fourteen, the love of books became marked. The mechanical work of a printing-office was about that time exchanged for the duty of acting as a primary tutor in various rural families. Close upon this, there followed the rise of spiritual life in the soul. There is evidence in his own hand-writing of a definite dedication to God so early as October 1847. The covenant he then subscribes, as recorded in a private note-book, is in these words—"I take God the Father to be my God and Father in Christ,—God the Son to be my Mediator, Redeemer, Saviour, Intercessor and Guide,—God the Holy Spirit as my Renewer, Sanctifier, Enlightener, and Teacher. I promise in the strength of Divine grace to fulfil the duties which I owe to God—to bend my will to the dictates of the Holy Scriptures—to seek the mortification of sin—to flee from youthful lusts—to evade the snares of the evil one—to cherish the influences of the Holy Spirit—to cultivate fellowship and communion with God—to surrender myself entirely to His service—to devote my time, talents, and energies to Him—to devote myself to Him in the gospel of His Son—to yield myself entirely to Him to be saved by His grace, sanctified by His Spirit, disposed of for His glory, and at last received into His heavenly kingdom.

Knowing that duties so sacred, solemn, and important require more than human strength for their discharge, I would lean entirely on God and on His promise, As thy days so shall thy strength be." The signature to this dedication is renewed every six months up till the date of his actually entering on the special studies for the ministry at the Divinity Hall. The same private record contains certain rules for practical guidance. This is followed by a minute form of self-examination written out for each day of the week. These, again, are succeeded by a briefly expressed but earnestly kept diary, the chief strain of which turns on two things—the progress of his studies and the struggles of his spiritual life. Week by week, and month by month for years, details on these two points are patiently entered, commented on, and prayed over. Every page of the little diary breathes an earnest aspiration after fitness for the Saviour's service, together with a close and humble observation of his own heart.

One of the teaching engagements of this period took him for some time into the neighbouring county of Kirkcudbright, and brought him under the ministry of the Rev. James Goold of Newton-Stewart, whose warm friendship he retained through life. Mr Goold says: "He was, I think, little more than fifteen years of age when he became tutor to

the family of one of my elders. He was much esteemed by all the members of that family as a painstaking and conscientious teacher; and also for the serious and devout manner in which he conducted himself. He then feared God above many, and gave earnest heed to the duties of personal godliness. The hills and glens around Corefeckloch (the name of the farm-house where he was tutor) could witness to his prayers and vows; while in conversation with the intelligent Christian people who were wont to visit there, he showed an amount of information far beyond his years. He was a most regular attender of the house of God, and gave good heed to the word spoken. He had an excellent memory and used it to the benefit of others as well as for his own. I remember after preaching a sermon to the young, on God's promise of a new heart, going home with him, a distance of about twelve miles. After tea, he went to the kitchen, and I heard him repeat to the children and servants the greater part of the sermon very much as it had been delivered. He possessed the musical faculty also, and the congregation very gladly availed itself of his talent; so that during most of the time he resided in this locality, he conducted our psalmody to the great satisfaction of all, and of none more than his warm friend then, and ever afterwards, the late Bailie Rowatt of Edinburgh.

He was a lover of good books, and eagerly read all such as came within his reach. He recollected what he read, loved to communicate it, and did this in such a way as both to charm and to instruct his listeners." "Among other traits of his character which came under my observation was his remarkable unselfishness, his readiness to oblige and help, especially where there was trouble. It happened that in the family in which he passed his second winter here, fever broke out. One member of the family died, while other members of it were stricken down. There were no neighbours near,—the place being one of the wildest and most out-of-the-way, in the parish of Minigaff, but Mr. Hamilton was at that time as an angel of mercy. Whether by day or by night, he was ready to travel long distances for medical aid, or for such remedies as might be required. Few would have braved the risk of continuing in the fever-stricken home, few would have undertaken such journeys as he did. But it was done by him without a murmur, and with that cheerfulness and frankness which distinguished him through life. After leaving this locality he went to Whithorn and taught a school there, where he made for himself many true friends, and attracted a large amount of sympathy and encouragement. Long after he left, his name and his good qualities were cherished and spoken of in these localities,



and when he came to be a preacher, his occasional ministrations here were greatly esteemed, especially by those who knew him as the bright and cheerful boy-tutor."

The Rev. John Inglis, the well-known missionary of Aneityum, who has returned to spend his well-earned and honoured leisure in his native district of Galloway, sends me, also, a kind "reminiscence" of the same period. "While he resided at Core-fecklock he was noted for the diligence with which he pursued his studies. The Rev. Mr. Goldie, minister at that time, in Bargrennan *quoad sacra* Church, kindly offered to give him lessons in Latin and Greek, to further his preparation for college. Mr. Hamilton gladly accepted this offer, and every morning he walked three miles away and three miles back, for the sake of these lessons; but so energetic and so conscientious was he, that he was never late a single morning for his own school. Another striking feature of his character was his moral earnestness. His religion was vital; it was not only a living, but also a vigorous principle within him. His was literally a 'visible saintship'; no raillery, no joking, no sneering, could make him conceal, far less deny, his religious convictions. The 'world's dread laugh' had no terrors for him; there was no halting between two opinions; his piety was pronounced; his character was decided;

from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures; and already, while yet a mere boy, he had caught up the mantle, had imbibed the spirit of his honoured, beloved, and lamented maternal uncle."

The course of his youthful struggle toward the place of usefulness to which by God's blessing he attained, is one of a kind that is familiar, and need not be dwelt upon in detail. After the first desires for book-learning sprung up, various teaching appointments of the kind above described were fulfilled with success. When he had taught some months in the school at Whithorn, he made an arrangement by which he was enabled to attend the University of Glasgow, for the session 1847-48. He then returned to the Whithorn school for the summer months. Later in the same year he was transferred to a boarding-school at Stanmore near Lanark, where he taught a twelvemonth without break—thus missing the college session of 1848-49. In October 1849 he came to Edinburgh and entered the University there, pursuing without further interruption the ordinary Arts curriculum to its close, which he reached in the spring of 1852. In the autumn of that year he entered the Divinity Hall of the Reformed Presbyterian Church which then met at Paisley under the richly spiritual and fruitful superintendence of Dr. Andrew Symington, who was sole Professor. At the death of this

greatly loved and honoured teacher in 1854—a man whose work is less widely known in these days than it ought to be,[1]—that school of Divinity was transferred to Glasgow under the double Professorship of Dr. William Symington and Dr. W. H. Goold, where it was marked by great efficiency. Mr. Hamilton completed his Divinity course by attending for three continuous sessions under the new professors, having thus fulfilled the statutory five years attendance. During all these years in Arts and Divinity he was constantly engaged in public and private tuition in Edinburgh, the Theological Hall arrangements being such that attendance on it was required only during the two autumn months when school work is suspended. Having thus carried on his studies to their completion, he received license to preach the gospel from the Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery of Edinburgh, on the 14th October, 1856; and on the following Sabbath commenced his public labours by preaching in the pulpit of his pastor, teacher, and friend, Dr. Goold.

During these student years, which were also years of responsible duty of other kinds well dis-

[1] See it touched, however, by a graceful pen in the memoir of his brother and successor, in a volume entitled "Messiah the Prince, &c., by William Symington, D.D., late Professor of Theology in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, with a Memoir of the Author, by his sons." London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1881.

charged, his course had been a creditable one as a scholar. He was not a foremost man in his classes, nor did he exhibit any strong leaning towards any special branch of the studies in Arts, if we except that evident *penchant* for mental and moral philosophy which marks almost all successful Scotch theologians and preachers. But the congenial influences, furnished by a University residence, ripened in him that general culture which appeared in all his utterances. Such teachers as Sir William Hamilton, Professor John Wilson, Professor Fraser (at that time a Lecturer outside of the University), made a deep impression upon him, and gave a bent to his tastes and studies which he always retained. Those Edinburgh years also opened up many friendships, and brought out and strengthened in him those traits of mind and character which made him so pleasant and so useful all through. On the manly industry and the high unselfishness it is not necessary further to dwell; but the geniality, the keen appreciation of whatever is truly excellent in books, in men, and in life were greatly fostered by the influences of these College years. The friends who have favoured me with their kindly reminiscences, beginning from this period and extending forward into his ministerial life, dwell with delight upon these last-mentioned features.

Mr. Goold, of Newton-Stewart, says — "All who knew him loved him. He was such good company. There was always sunshine in his face. He was happy himself, and he made others happy. Yet no one could ever accuse him of levity or frivolity. His piety was too deep and solid for that. But it was the piety of the gospel of great joy; and hence he was never sour, nor morose, nor stiff in his conversation, but cheerful and open. Nothing that belonged to man's weal was alien to him. Hence, on all the passing topics of the day, especially as these affected the welfare of man, the progress of the truth, and the honour of the Master, he delightedly conversed on fitting occasions—never with the narrowness or bitterness of the partizan, but with the breadth and charity of a truly Christian man." Mr. M'Dermid, his uncle's and his mother's friend, has, in notices public and private, adverted to his characteristic public spirit. "Though," says he, "I can hardly be said to have had any personal intercourse with him till the time of my coming to Glasgow and his later student years, and especially after his settlement at Renton, yet from the bond I have already referred to, and his own openness of nature, when we met at any time it was very much as old friends who seemed to have known each other all our days. Once, however, in Dumfries, a

walk we took by the banks of the Nith on a fine summer evening, when we had a long conversation, left a most pleasant trace on my mind, and I may say laid the foundation of a kind of intercourse that continued to the last. Renton being near to Glasgow, he frequently paid me a visit, and often remained a night in my house. No visitor was more welcome or contributed more to the happiness of the household. His intelligence, indeed, as well as cordiality made his visits of the nature of an event. I used to feel after an evening's intercourse with him as if I had a more correct conception of the political, ecclesiastical, and theological aspect of the time, and as if I knew better where we were in our human history, and whither we were going. No notice of Mr. Hamilton would be complete without referring to the great geniality of disposition—a geniality that he never indeed allowed to interfere with his higher and more professional duties, but the cultivation of which nevertheless, at his times of leisure was a source alike of instruction and enjoyment both to himself and his friends. The friendship that is cultivated by the mutual interchange of thought on matters of public interest is conducive as an important element in civilized life, but as he himself was accustomed to look at what was going on both in political and

ecclesiastical society, with a Christian and intelligent eye, intercourse with him became alike agreeable and instructive; and at such seasons of social intercourse, whatever turn conversation might take with him—however bright or amusing it might sometimes be—it always tended to promote what was true and honourable in character, and, in a wholesome manner, to strengthen the principles of social morality and sound religion."

This combination of usefulness and pleasantness in his conversation and his social intercourse rested upon the union in him of two qualities not always found together in the same person. He had a keen perception of facts, a lambent humour, which played around all the human character and life which came under his observation, so that nothing characteristic seemed to escape him, but there was joined with this so intense an interest in the reality of things, such a prompt sympathy with human feeling, such a deep kindliness, that his observation was never bitter, and his sense of humour never degenerated into reckless desire to give amusement. I cannot forbear quoting a few sentences from the letters of two friends of his later years to show how invariably these qualities of public-heartedness, of geniality, and of true gladness struck those who had the privilege of his friendship :—"It is not difficult," says one, "to mention some of the qualities in him that

were specially attractive. There was his utter shrinking from everything double and unfair; his cordial sympathy with every good and noble cause, and with those who might be labouring or suffering in order to promote it; his public spirit, and not less marked, his kind interest in private friends and in their joys and sorrows. His manner too was most cordial and bright. He indeed carried about with him a kind of moral and spiritual sunshine. How often have I seen him come into a little gathering of ministerial friends, over whom hung the cloud which the mental and spiritual strain of their work is apt to engender, and with some happy remark or narrative dispel it like a ray of kindly light." Another says, "There was nothing more noticeable about him, nothing which more certainly impressed even those who knew him but slightly, than the combination in him of deep seriousness and thoughtfulness with a singularly bright and cheerful temper. When he came into my house, as, being near neighbours, he did pretty often, he was invariably like sunshine, and so he was everywhere. Yet sure I am that it was impossible for any one so to misjudge, even for a time, his natural cheerfulness as to suppose him destitute of deeper and more solid qualities. His unerring good sense and sound judgment, his thoughtfulness, his piety, were as apparent to those about him as his sunny temper.

However bright or even mirthful his demeanour, it was always consistent with his ministerial and Christian character. He had

'A grace in being gay which even mournful souls approved.' "

When Mr. Hamilton received license to preach the gospel, and was sent forth as a probationer throughout the vacancies of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, his gifts were at once recognised and appreciated. He soon received two calls, one to West Campbell Street congregation, Glasgow, to be successor to the late Rev. Dr. Bates, another to Renton, Dumbartonshire, to succeed the Rev. John M'Kinlay, who had been minister of that church for upwards of fifty years. He chose the latter; was ordained to the ministry of the gospel on the 25th of August, 1857, and was introduced to his people on the following Sabbath by the Rev. Thomas M'Indoe of Whithorn, he himself preaching his first sermon as ordained pastor from the words, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."[1]

When the two competing calls were laid before him, many thought that had his choice been reversed he would have had a wider and more influential sphere of labour than could be furnished by the little town in the valley of the Leven. The fact,

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 11.

however, is that it seldom happens to a minister of any denomination in a rural district, to obtain such an influence as he did, throughout the whole locality of which his church was the centre. He loved the valley with the love of one who had a keen eye for the beautiful: especially did he love his flock who were scattered up and down in it; and by them he was warmly loved in return. As an old protesting congregation, its membership was drawn from those who loved the ancient cause, and kept up their attendance at Levenside though residing, many of them, at long distances from the church. This circumstance naturally gave him a sort of parish of widely extended boundaries; and in course of time he became known and honoured through its whole extent by people of all denominations. He went to Renton with a high reputation for preaching power, and he maintained that reputation to the last. Families not belonging to the Reformed Presbyterian Church were frequently attracted to his congregation, some of them becoming members of it to enjoy the benefit of his ministry, which was at once cultivated and soundly evangelical. It was thoroughly useful in the best and most spiritual sense. This was seen not only in the success of his ordinary pulpit and pastoral work, but in the fruits of his evangelistic addresses in the various localities where members of his flock were to be found. For though

he did not say so much as some do about the evangelistic department of the Christian ministry, yet he did more and entered more seriously into this kind of work than those could have supposed who saw him only amid the vivacity and cheerfulness of social life. Without any self-consciousness or self-importance, he was, indeed, during his ministry in this interesting district "a burning and a shining light."

Nor was his influence confined to the locality in which he specially laboured. Many a district might be named where it might be said he had "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." At Newton-Stewart, Whithorn, and other districts of his native Galloway, his occasional ministrations were generally esteemed. In some more distant localities brought near by the common tie of the Reformed Presbyterian connection, he was well known and his services welcomed. Among these Liverpool may be named, where in the person of the late Rev. Dr. Graham of Shaw Street Presbyterian Church he had a warm friend. His visits to that congregation are well-remembered, and communion seasons there were made hallowed and memorable by the solemnity of his ministrations. On the occasion of the death of Dr. Graham, to whom he was much attached, he preached the funeral sermon, which was afterwards published at the

request of the kirk-session of that congregation. One who heard it says: "The force and magnetic power of his utterance cannot be transferred to the printed page, but the closing sentences have a peculiar interest to us who think of him now."

"Believers die unto the Lord, because their safe and joyful departure is another trophy of their Lord's victory over death, and the path by which they enter into His glory. His honour is concerned in their deliverance from the last enemy, and all the graces they manifest are the evidences of His fidelity to His promises, and of the efficacy of His death. Death is not a state, but an act; not a permanent abode, but a transient passage. The holy dead are the living who have died. 'Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord.' They have a consciousness more vital, more intense, and they are capable of a higher blessedness. They have unclouded and uninterrupted communion with the Lord. They are fashioned after His likeness. By this act of death, whose certainty, nearness, finality, and terror, make it so appalling to many of the children of men, believers pass into the immediate presence of their Redeemer, and attain the fruition of all their hopes. Their whole life in the flesh has been directed to Him—their energies, their experiences, their discipline, their trials, their deepest joys, and their most sacred sorrows, have all centred round Him, and taken their complexion from their relation to Him, and death has opened for them the gate of life, and now they are for ever with the Lord. This was the final end of their own prayers and efforts, and it is the fulfilment of His intercession in their behalf."

To return for a moment to the Renton ministry. Many witnesses might be cited to its loving and laborious character. Not a few of them, however,

are already like himself "before the Throne." I can recall as, from time to time, it fell under my own observation, the manifoldness of the labour. Besides the regular well-drawn-out Sabbath service with its addition of Bible classes, there were the prayer-meetings or similar gatherings every other evening or so at Bonhill, or Alexandria, or Dumbarton, or Cardross. There were the sick visits and other pastoral offices to discharge every day throughout the same wide-spread localities, and then there was the house and study ever open to the call of friendship, or to the visit of those needing encouragement and counsel. But over and above all, there was time found for keeping up to the literature and the public interests of the day. For a delineation of the relations he bore to his flock, I cannot do better than quote the words used by the present pastor of Levenside congregation, Rev. Archibald Bell, in a touching pulpit reference made shortly after the death of his predecessor.

"If ever there was a man, to be held in loving remembrance by his congregation, that man was John Hamilton. For the best part of his life he laboured among you, loving and being loved. I have had abundant opportunity of knowing what he was and what he did while he was here, and I have always found that his memory, fondly cherished by all who knew him, was most fragrant in the lowly homes of the poor and the sick and the sad. There never was a minister of any congregation who left behind him a name more universally held in esteem. Not only his own, but people of all

classes and of different denominations, nay, even of different religions, were ready to testify their regard whenever his name was spoken. So his memorial is in our midst at this hour. He lives on in the hearts of men, and that is a memorial vastly more to be desired than sculptured magnificence or monumental display. Those who knew him cannot wonder that he held the hearts of all about him. He was gentle without a trace of weakness. He was cordial without a touch of insincerity. He was bright without one vestige of frivolity. He was broad and enlightened without being ill-defined or lax. With whatsoever things are true, venerable, just, pure, lovely, or of good report, he ever was the readiest of sympathisers. And surely he has a special claim to grateful remembrance at your hand, for all his love and all his varied powers were exercised on your behalf. For seventeen years he was the sharer of your sorrows, your helper in the season of trial, your comforter in the time of tears. No man was ever more devoted to a congregation than he was to you. Your highest interest was his. It was his persevering effort, all through the years he spent among you, to build you up living temples of the living God; it was the end and the aim of his life among you to secure, by every means within his power, your happiness in the world that now is, as well as in that which is to come. So this afternoon let me ask you, as you shall see his face no more, as you shall not again hear with the natural ear his well-known voice, to cherish the memory of one so dear, to remember him who so lovingly and so long spoke to you from this pulpit the ever-enduring word of God. It may seem at this hour, when your hearts are full and your eyes are dewy, as you think of the past, something like a needless and a harsh request to ask you to remember him. But, my brethren, I want you to pay to his memory the highest tribute you can yield. I want you to remember him in the best way in which any good man can be remembered. I want you to live like him. Be kindly and gentle be broad and firm, be manly and Christ-like. As he

was, be ye. So remember him who hath spoken to you, the word of God and his faith follow. Then, though his bodily presence can never more be seen within these walls, though he sleeps in silence fast by the din and turmoil of a busy city, nevertheless, by your hearts and lives, through this word of God, which, as of old, is now preached to you, this word which liveth and abideth for ever, the old familiar voice may be heard, and he, being dead, may yet speak."

Mr. Hamilton's interest in public affairs, and especially in their relation to the welfare of the race and the progress of the Redeemer's Kingdom, was a characteristic which has been already noticed as brightening and elevating his private and social intercourse. The *trait* was soon observed by his brethren in the ministry of his own Church, and found its appropriate recognition in various ways. In 1864 he was appointed Convener of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod's Committee on "The Signs of the Times," or, as it came afterwards to be entitled, on "Public Questions." This office he held till the year 1873—the interesting reports which he laid annually on the table of the Supreme Court being printed regularly in what was then the organ of the denomination. The first of these took such hold on the minds of his brethren that the then editor of the magazine—Rev. J. H. Thomson, now of Hightae—asked him to contribute also what were termed "Notes on Public Affairs," for every

...With his usual readiness to ... says Mr. Thomson, "he at once ... I see I have still the brief note ... the first paper in Sept., 1865. I ... upwards of seventy papers from him ... were entirely free-will offerings. ... ever was in circumstances to reward ... editor has often to cut down contri- ... was seldom necessary in his case, ... instance, did our friend take it ill. ... look back upon the years from ..., and think of his many admir- ... of the hours we have spent ... remember ever a display of ..., in Presbytery and in every ... we were together, he seems to me ... direct model of self-restraint and ... can scarcely conceive what a ... he was, how ready he was ... everybody else had been applied ... Hamilton was sure to come if he ... claim he threw about everything ... the house."

... years of his Renton minis- ... were made to him to transfer ... spheres of ministerial labour. ... these offered great ex- ... he steadily declined them all, and

declined them so promptly and quietly that most of them were never heard of by his own people at all; indeed, so far as I can remember, none of them, with a single exception, were allowed by him to proceed to the stage of being heard in the church courts. The exception was a call to the newly-formed St. George's Road Congregation, Glasgow, which was moderated in by the Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery of the bounds, in July, 1860, but which was declined by him in a lettter read at their next meeting.

In 1874 there came to him a proposal to change the sphere of his labours, which he finally saw his way to accept. The steps which led to this change are of some general public interest, and a few remarks on these may therefore not be out of place. For ten years, from 1863 to 1873, the movement for Union among four of the non-established Presbyterian denominations, three in Scotland and one in England, had held a foremost place among ecclesiastical interests in this country. Begun amid many fervent and encouraging expressions of Christian brotherhood, indeed, with an outburst of enthusiasm, the movement had gradually become involved in perplexities besetting the internal life of one of the negotiating Churches. A party within the Free

Church, which had shown some disaffection from the first, had now succeeded in exciting such violence of feeling as to bring the Union movement, so far as that Church was concerned, to a standstill. It was never alleged, even at the time, that the arrest was owing to any discovery in the course of negotiations, of serious differences among the Churches themselves. The future historian will have no difficulty in unravelling the clue. Already it has become plain that the opponents of Union in the Free Church were the unconscious instruments of those who, outside of all the four Churches, had an imperative interest, at once ecclesiastical and political, in arresting the movement. For their success in fomenting the unhappy policy of disunion was immediately followed by the enactment of the "Abolition of Patronage Act," in 1874, intended to divert the movement for Union into another groove, in which, however, it has refused to run. Meanwhile, the Churches had passed what was called an "Act of Mutual Eligibility," that is to say, an Act allowing congregations of any one of the Churches to call, under certain regulations, a minister of any of the others as if he were already labouring within the same fold. Mr. Hamilton was the first minister transferred under this Act. Indeed, his call has been among the very few instances of its operation which have taken place

up to this date. The enactment was so soon followed by the union of the Reformed Presbyterian Church itself with the Free Church in 1876, and of the United Presbyterian congregations in England with the English Presbyterian congregations in 1877 to form the present Presbyterian Church of England, that the scope of its operations was reduced in the brief period of three years from its passing, and reduced by the success of that very spirit of union which it sought to perpetuate.

Mr. Hamilton's call was not only the first but a very early instance of the effect of this Act. On the 11th of March, 1874, the Free West Church, Glasgow, asked their Presbytery to moderate in a call to the Reformed Presbyterian minister of Renton to be their pastor. This they were entitled to do in consequence of the Act above referred to having been passed by the Assembly in the previous May. In pursuance of the regular steps prescribed by the Act, this call was carried by Dr. Buchanan, Dr. Adam, and other Commissioners, to the Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery of Paisley, met there on 28th April, 1874. A technical difficulty existed. It was well known that the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, which was wont to meet early in May, were prepared to pass at their first meeting a Mutual Eligibility Act corresponding to that of the other Churches, but they had had no

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high honour, although it is one of which I am personally unworthy, to be a connecting link between two Churches whose principles, sympathies, and aspirations are so nearly akin that their continued separation cannot be defended, however it may be explained. . . . I trust that the congregation of Renton will maintain its character for unity, prayerfulness, and determination, qualities which it has signally displayed on some trying occasions in its history, and that it will seek and obtain a pastor after God's own heart, who will continue with increasing vigour the work in which my two predecessors and myself have had the privilege to take part. Except the vicissitudes and trials incident to every ministry I have had unbroken comfort among them, and I desire to bear testimony before this Court to their fidelity and constancy. . . . It is right to add that I have no difficulty in accepting the principles of the Free Church, for I have always cherished an admiration for them, and, like most ministers of the present generation, have felt the spell of those noble men whose struggles issued in so great a victory for the truth of God and the liberty of the Church, and whose genius, largeness of mind, courage, self-sacrifice, and personal holiness, have shed a lustre on the recent history of Christianity, and given an impulse to spiritual forces which will not easily be spent."

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but no man in the Presbytery had a more complete combination of the various gifts, mental and spiritual, that are required in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. We used to feel that he was a man whom we could never be wrong in calling upon for any kind of help—a man who was qualified for it, and sure to respond admirably to whatever was expected, for he was always ready and reliable. You never found him but thoroughly abreast of his own duties, and so, able and willing to spare time to come to your assistance; while his cordial consent made you feel that he was receiving the favour, not conferring it."

"There was thus a healthiness of mind and heart about him all round, which I find it difficult to express in words, but which his co-presbyters who knew him felt to be an influence of the highest kind. Indeed, there are some of us who know that the idea we had of what it is to be a minister of Jesus Christ has been materially raised by our friendship with John Hamilton, and that the Presbytery of Glasgow has a colder look about it since his cordial greeting and kindly smile are to be found there no more."

It is not meant to be implied in these statements that he had any public prominence as a presbyter. "He was not ambitious of figuring in Church Courts," as the same friend has remarked,

had been enlivened during every day by a ceaseless and cheerful company of friends coming and going, he himself, according to his wont, appearing to be wholly in and of the business of the meetings. But towards the closing day it became evident that he was under some gathering cloud. It was afterwards well remembered that at the end of the last sermon preached in his own church, he reminded his people that he had that day completed a ministry of exactly four years among them. On the very last occasion of his opening his mouth for his Master in public—the mission service above alluded to—he remarked to the friend who accompanied him to and from Keppochhill that he had a feeling of languor and unwonted heaviness. In a few days fever declared itself, and went on gradually increasing in intensity. But its course was so insidious as not greatly to alarm, and was even broken by gleams that seemed to promise recovery. Those around him were, moreover, rendered less apprehensive by never having seen him ill before. When it was necessary for a near friend to supply his pulpit on the second Sabbath of June, it was remarked that such an occurrence—inability to appear in the pulpit—had never once happened before in the course of his ministry. There is no form of bereavement more trying than that which

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special prayer-meetings held on his behalf by his devoted people—but his Master's time for him was set. He entered into rest and into the Master's joy on the 21st of August, in the forty-ninth year of his age, and the twenty-first of his ministry. It was remembered as his Renton office-bearers gathered in the black-covered pew on the following Sabbath, August 25th, to honour his memory, that exactly that day twenty-one years before he had been ordained among them as their pastor. The funeral was largely attended by members and adherents of both the congregations over which he had presided, as well as by many private friends. —the service in the Free West Church on that day being conducted by the Rev. Andrew Melville, Clerk to the Presbytery, and by the Rev. George Reith, of Free College Church. Appropriate and affecting funeral sermons were preached on the succeeding Sabbath, September 1st, by his old and attached friend, Rev. J. M'Dermid, and by his valued fellow-labourer in Glasgow, Rev. Dr. Logan Aikman, of the United Presbyterian Church. His mortal remains were laid in Sighthill Cemetery, in the near neighbourhood of the little mission church which he so earnestly fostered, and where he preached his last sermon.

It is easy to understand how dear such a man must have been in the intimacy of the domestic

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a deep and spiritual genuineness to his domestic and social and every form of life. He was free from many of the littlenesses that sometimes disfigure even saintly persons. There was about him no petty ambition, no jealousy, no desire in what he did to outshine others, but only by the faithful discharge, under God, of every kind of duty to do justice to himself, to the Church and to the world at large. The atmosphere in the midst of which he lived was healthful piety, goodness and benevolence. One of the most dutiful of sons, one of the kindest of brothers, one of the most intelligent companions, one of the truest of friends, one of the ablest of preachers, one of the most devoted of pastors, there was in him a combination of qualities each of a high order such as one seldom meets with. The Presbytery desires by his removal to learn anew the lesson 'Occupy till I come,' and to be enabled so to occupy that when the Master comes, He may say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"

SERMONS.

I.

THE TRUE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL JOY.

(Preached at the opening of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, May 5th, 1873.)

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."—Luke x. 20.

THE Lord, intending to pass through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem, sent messengers into one of its villages to prepare for Him a lodging. The peculiar season of the year, however, reminded the jealous Samaritan of the object sought by passing through his land; and although the inhabitants of Sychar had once besought Jesus to tarry with them, and had declared that they knew that He was the Christ the Saviour of the world, one of their villages refused to receive Him now—a refusal which awakened so keen a resentment in the sons of thunder, that they asked Him, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven

and consume them, even as Elias did?" He went towards the Jordan, going along the borders of Samaria; and after He had spoken many discourses in Jerusalem, during the Feast of Tabernacles, He returned towards the Jordan, and retired for a time into Perea. It was from this place, and about this time, that He sent forth the Seventy, and the period occupied by their mission could not have been longer than the interval between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Dedication, and was probably not so long. But it is for us of deeper interest to remember that the sphere of that mission embraced the country of the Samaritans, who had so recently rejected Him. Instead of fire from heaven to consume them, He sent messengers of mercy among them to proclaim glad tidings of great joy, and to heal the sick. Thus sent out by two and two, as "lambs among wolves," carrying nothing with them, depending for their daily support upon the kindness of others, bearing in their very manner a sign of the urgency of their mission, bringing with them the message of peace, yet charged with the power of a valid appeal to the judgment-seat of Christ, they had gone, and they had returned. They had found everything as He had told them. They had also seen the Samaritan fields white unto the harvest, and they had reaped [illegible]its unto life-everlasting. They had found

the name of Christ to be of such power that the devils had gone out when it was pronounced over the demoniacs; and now, heated with a success so sudden and so great, thrilling with a tremulous excitement at the marvellous powers with which they had been endowed, they returned to their Master with joy, and said—"Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." He reciprocated their joy, and acknowledged the works which had been wrought in His name; but knowing how near to vanity, self-complacency, and turbid exaltation were their emotions, He corrected the enthusiasm of success by the joy of safety, and turned it into a purer channel. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

I.—In these words THE LORD RATIFIES THE FACT THAT THEY HAD CAST OUT DEVILS IN HIS NAME, AND IMPLIES THAT THIS WAS A GROUND OF GRATEFUL JOY.

The peculiar cases here alluded to are plainly distinguished from the common sick. Every attempt, moreover, to resolve the phenomena into nervous disorders, or into some violent derangement of the psychic principle, issues in failure. The historic truth of these possessions is assumed

[illegible] The words spoken by the Lord [illegible] reality and presence of foul spirits [illegible] enemies and tempters of the souls of [illegible] under this malignant possession, [illegible] will and double consciousness— [illegible] spirit thinking and speaking, [illegible] responsible self crying out for mercy [illegible] compassionate Saviour. Our Lord cast out [illegible] omnipotence, and [illegible] His mercy and His sympathy with [illegible]. He gave power to His [illegible] and they had exer- [illegible] with surprising effect. [illegible] makes their success now with [illegible] words. "And he said unto them, I be- [illegible] from heaven. Behold [illegible] power to tread on serpents and [illegible] all the power of the enemy: [illegible] by any means hurt you."[1]

[illegible] miracles has passed, but the promise [illegible] and is receiving constant fulfil- [illegible] that believeth on me, the works that [illegible] and greater works than [illegible] because I go to my Father."[2] [illegible] events in the region of nature have [illegible] but supernatural powers continue to [illegible] the sphere of grace, and spirits are [illegible]

[1] Luke x. 19. [2] John xiv. 12.

made subject to us through the name of Jesus. The enemy is the same as in the days of the Incarnation, and we adopt in their strict and awful significance the words of the Apostle—"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."[1] All this hostile operation has for its root the principle of rebellion against God, and is sustained by the unseen but ever active power of Satan. The form of this rebellion varies with a thousand circumstances. It may take the shape of brutal violence, or of foul impurity, or of a base and degrading love of the world, or of a refined selfishness, or of a gay and reckless indifference, or of a false philosophy, or of a corrupt religion. It may come as an angel of light, with its soft justifications of evil, using the names of humanity, philanthropy, freedom, and charity; instilling the venom of unbelief and rebellion against God and His Christ. "The wisdom that is from beneath is earthly, sensual, devilish." Brethren, Christ has ordained the Church, and endowed her with power to bring these evil spirits into subjection. Let us realise the greatness of the conflict and the issues that hang upon it. Let us bring before our minds the reality, fierceness, and unrest-

[1] Eph. vi. 12.

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er seen anything parallel to this ? Young converts crude and imwing with a fiery zeal, and reaping mid scenes of external commotion, a presumption and a self-will very oncile with the presence of any real earts. They are too ready to treat all who do not adopt their methods, ir watchwords, and who cannot point y in their arbitrary self-conceit are ll testimonies of Christ's power. This is r, the temptation of raw recruits alone; nd in its subtlest form among those whose tempered with wisdom, and whose chief tic is an eager and bustling activity. The on of rapid and imposing results is quite le with noble gifts and true service. s an enthusiasm of success, issuing in us vanity, which allies itself with genius, kindling imagination, with lofty moral aims,

with real consecration of heart, and with fruitfulness in the vineyard of the Lord. Impelled by the fire of his own spirit within, and drawn by the plaudits of admiring multitudes without, a man of true worth may become overheated by the rapidity of his own motion. The fire of a burning zeal, and the momentum of an intense activity, may generate such pride and vanity, such lurid and malign influences, as shall injure the soul, and, injuring it, shall corrupt and defile the work itself. Many successful workers have yielded to this subtle temptation, and their works have become the means of corrupting their spiritual life.

Or, we may find an illustration in some spiritual movement within the Church of Christ. Judging by its principles, by the character of its representatives or the predominating motives which have seemed to influence them, by the struggles, sacrifices, and efforts, which have marked its history, and by the results in which these have issued, you cannot doubt that its origin was of God, that the Spirit of wisdom and understanding was the guiding, moving, quickening agent by whom it was carried forward. But still there was much in it of human error and weakness, of self-complacency and vain-glory, of arrogant self-assertion and contempt of others. Its advocates and supporters were even exposed to the peril of coming to Christ with the boastful

utterance, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name." Let us, brethren, whether we be charged with the high and holy work of the Gospel ministry, whether we be clothed with the functions of the eldership, or whether we be doing the Lord's work in more retired and private spheres, resist this insidious foe, and not allow self-exaltation to mar the beauty of spiritual work and life. Nor let it be supposed that this is a venial fault. It is deeply offensive to the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. It is an invasion of His honour. It is unworthy of the simplicity of Christ. It mars the excellence of genuine service. It defiles the soul itself, and it tends to alienation and selfish separation from other labourers in the vineyard of the Lord. That it has so specious an appearance makes the temptation the more dangerous, and demands on our part watchfulness, self-scrutiny, daily meditation on the sufferings of Christ, and an increasing acquaintance with the nature and ends of Christian work.

III.—IF THE LORD FORBIDS HIS DISCIPLES TO REJOICE UNDULY IN THE SUBJECTION OF THE SPIRITS, HE OFFERS TO THEM INSTEAD A SOURCE OF PURE, RICH, AND EVERLASTING GLADNESS:—"But rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

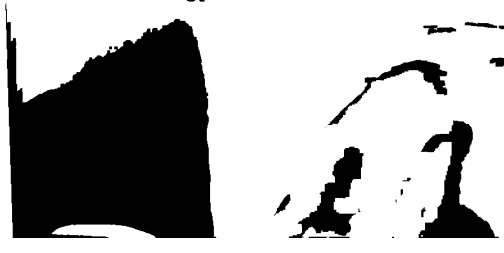
The figure is grounded upon the custom of inscribing the names of the citizens of a town in a burgess-roll, in virtue of which they were owned as citizens and might claim all civic privileges. It first occurs in the memorable passage in Exodus xxxii. 32, in which the mediator of the ancient dispensation prays—"If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." The prayer reminds us of Paul's strong expression of self-sacrificing devotion—"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."[1] The language is figurative, but it undoubtedly implies that there is in the hand of God what is equivalent to a written roll among men—a roll of the righteous securing to all whose names are inscribed in it life before God, both in the theocratic kingdom and in the heavenly. In Isaiah iv. 3, "And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem," something more is obviously meant than the population entered in the city register; for the verb denotes that the name was written for a certain purpose. There is implied the notion of predestination and the existence of a divine "book of life." The kernel of faith within them was a sign

[1] Rom. ix. 3.

and evidence that they were enrolled in the book of the living God, and that they would escape his penal judgments, which would utterly destroy the impenitent. Similarly, deliverance in the time of the Messiah is promised in Daniel "to everyone that shall be found written in the book."[1] The persons intended were to be partakers of the redemption coming in and through the Messiah, and that because of their enrolment in the book of life.

The figure is very familiar to us in the New Testament. "Ye are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven."[2] The reference is to the roll of God's elect ones in their immutable designation to grace and glory. Of him that overcometh, the Faithful and True witness says, "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life;"[3] and all who are thus written shall overcome. The reason why some are not suffered to "wonder after the beast" is that their names are inscribed in that book, whereas "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."[4] In the account of the last judgment John says, "And the books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life. . . . And whosoever was not found written in

[1] Dan. xii. 1. [2] Heb. xii. 23. [3] Rev. iii. 5.
[4] Rev. xiii. 3, 8; xvii. 8.



to a cold and critical analysis, or of using it as the buttress of a merely logical orthodoxy, we ought to be moved by it to adoration, to deep humility of spirit, and to the cultivation of a tender and solemn thankfulness. For our Lord himself offers thanks to God for His sovereign grace, and rejoices in spirit not only over the swift and ignominious fall of Satan, but also over the names of His people written in heaven. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."[1] That which is the ground of adoration on the part of the Eternal Son ought to be a source of unmingled joy to His redeemed people. But if we are to rejoice in that our names are written in the heart of God and on the memory of Christ, we must make our calling and election sure. We cannot look into the book of life, in order to see whether our names be there. It is not by a direct gaze, nor by supernatural revelation, nor by mystic voices, nor by passages of scripture borne in upon the mind in an inexplicable way, nor by the testimony of others, that we are to know that we have been predestinated unto everlasting life. The real evidences are the possession and exercise of the graces

[1] Luke x. 21.

of the Spirit—habitual self-abasement under a sense of our unworthiness, constant and entire trust in the Saviour, true love to God and to His people as bearing His image, a sensible enjoyment and delight in spiritual things (especially in God's moral excellence, in the character of the Lord Jesus, and in the fellowship of the Spirit), holiness of heart and life, and growth in these and all the other fruits of righteousness. In addition to these, and partly through them, there is the witness of the Spirit Himself,[1] who is able to convey to the soul this knowledge. He is the spirit of truth and the spirit of Sonship, the seal of our redemption, and the earnest of our inheritance. Where this witness is possessed, and where there is the assurance of salvation, there is, and must be, joy—the highest joy.

The last clause of the text, as you will have observed, expresses a comparison—"but RATHER rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Our Lord lays down the principle of a relative and graduated gladness — a gladness that has proportion, harmony, symmetry. Let us be glad in health of body, and in external prosperity, in the gifts of mind He has given us, in the affection and devotion of friends, in the development of our powers, and in the discharge of our duties, in

[1] Rom. viii. 16.

the office we fill in His house, and in the success which may have crowned our labours. Let our joy in these things be real and unaffected; but let it be moderated by higher considerations, and let our highest joy rather be in that fact of which our Lord speaks, and in the experience of its blessedness. Hence will our joy be spontaneous, fresh, abundant, and everlasting—a healing balm and a blessed cordial—the spring of spiritual energy and a crown of manifold labour. For let it not be supposed that there is selfishness even in this highest gladness. It is not an arrogant grasping at private comfort, and a self-satisfying enjoyment of personal good, irrespective of the happiness of others. They misapprehend entirely the nature of electing grace who imagine that it is fitted to beget a morbid and selfish gratification in our own salvation or to make us indifferent to the welfare of others. Our Lord does not bid us be happy that we are simply safe, that we have escaped the wrath of God and the penal fires of hell, but He reveals to us a source of joy in the predestinating love of the Father which will purify and enlarge our hearts, and thereby qualify us for being instruments of spiritual blessing to the souls of others.

Finally, let me sum up the reasons why it is better for us to know that our names are written in heaven than to possess the brightest gifts or win the

greatest success. (1) It is better for our own spiritual comfort. There is no true blessedness except that which springs from our own interest in Christ and our union to Him. Without this, what avails success, personal influence, admiring thousands, and the most dazzling effects? For the knowledge of personal salvation is the knowledge of the special approbation of God. (2) It is better for the transforming effect it has upon our whole spiritual character. It promotes humility, personal holiness, love to God and man, perseverance in grace, and such purity of motive and desire that we are kept safe amid the temptations to pride and self-sufficiency that are so imminent in places of honourable labour and of abounding influence and usefulness. Little do they know of the purifying power of the Cross who represent its vital doctrines as tending to moral corruption and defilement. The end contemplated in eternity in the sovereign decree of election was that we should be without blame before God in love; and nothing tends more to this union of immaculate purity with a heavenly ardour of love than the persuasion wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit that we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. (3) The joy itself is of a higher kind. It is pre-eminently a joy in God, in His Being, in each Person of the adorable Godhead, in His

perfections, in His works, in His special grace, and in Himself as our portion. It is a joy which calms, purifies, and humbles the soul, while it increases its spiritual strength and brings it into growing conformity to the mind of Christ. (4) And, lastly, it is better in its influence upon our Christian work. It gives grandeur of conception. No object of contemplation is more ennobling than the successive and triumphant development of God's purposes on to their final consummation. If we are enabled to conceive of these aright (and what can give us more real and tender insight into them than our own interest in them), we shall always have objects of thought and meditation adequate to the most reverential and exalted exercise of our powers. The knowledge of personal salvation alone gives that experience of the grace of God which is necessary to any real dealing with the souls of others, and to any real dealing with God on their behalf; and it alone enables us to combine true ardour for spiritual results with that deep and entire resignation to the holy will of God which is the true disposition of all His people.

should be noted. Our Lord was surrounded by an immense concourse, in which we distinguish attached followers, a motley group of wavering admirers, and a compact body of eager and exasperated enemies. The occasion was one of great excitement. A poor wretch, half demon, half man, had come before our Lord, who healed him by a stupendous act of power, which created such wonder among the people that they declared Him to be the Messiah. This declaration aroused the hatred of the Pharisees and Scribes, who boldly charged the Holy One of God with casting out devils by Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. This accusation he repels, first, by putting the case clearly before them. "If Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" or, again, if He cast out devils by the prince of the devils, what had they to say of their own sons, who tried to cast them out by prescribing fasts, fumigations, and decoctions? If their half cures, their unreal cures, were to be ascribed to God, how much more the perfect and beneficent operations of the Man Christ Jesus? Then He describes Himself in parabolic language as the subduer of Satan, and the deliverer of those who had been his captives. He appeals to the expulsion of devils as a proof that the Stronger than Satan had appeared—that His presence upon earth was

a decisive moment for humanity, and accordingly that wherever He stands forth as a leader the watchword is heard, "He that is not with me is against me." The conflict is real, the issues are tremendous—all must take one side or the other; neutrality—conditional or unconditional, latent or avowed, friendly or hostile—is impossible. The Captain of human salvation regards every man who is not entirely on His side, and faithful to His service, as an enemy. When the two kingdoms are in declared conflict, there is no middle party—every man fights under the one standard or the other. We are each of us members either of the kingdom of light or of the kingdom of darkness.

Viewing them thus, in connection, we see that these two passages complete between them the presentation of a great truth. In the passage before us it is of *outward conformity* that our Lord speaks, in the other place it is of *inward unity*. In this place the question lies between the less and the more enlightened followers of Christ; in that, it is between the real friends and the real enemies of Christianity. This man was a real though unconscious disciple; neutrality, indifference, apathy, he was entirely free from; but the words recorded in the eleventh chapter refer to a condition of real alienation and hostility to Christ under the guise

of impartiality. The two statements, instead of contradicting or neutralizing complement or complete one another, and are necessary to set forth the whole truth, now on this side, now on that.

I.—Our text shows us THE DANGER OF A NARROW ZEAL AND A ONE-SIDED EXCLUSIVENESS.

The prohibition of the disciples was rash and presumptuous, although it had the aspect of great jealousy for the honour of Christ. They thought that this man had no right to take in hand such a work, that he had no authority, that his exorcism was an invasion of their prerogatives, and that it detracted from their peculiar and exclusive dignity. The times have changed, and the precise form of this sin cannot be repeated; but the spirit of it prevails in classes, in churches, and in individuals. In the arrogant claims of a priesthood to be recognized as the only divinely-appointed ministry of Christ, and in their denial of the validity of any ordination except that conferred by Episcopal hands and by direct succession from the apostles; in the false catholicity which regards its own commission as co-extensive with the visible kingdom of the Redeemer; in the narrow conceptions and unworthy conceits of partizans of every class, we see daily reflections of the offensive exclusiveness, of which these early disciples of Jesus Christ were

guilty. We know how prone churches are to represent either in letter or spirit that it is obligatory on every one to form a part of their organization, to identify himself with their interests, and to display their banners if he would enjoy the full benefit of the glorious gospel of the Blessed God. Such claims are obviously without foundation; for there is no church on earth that has embraced and exemplified the whole truth—no church free from corruptions and imperfections. But, even if any church were perfect, it would not be justified in condemning those who do not belong to it; and for this among other reasons, that perfection in doctrine, in government, in discipline, and in membership cannot be the attainment of all; that it must be progressive work, and that it would be the duty of the perfect church to help forward those in which they see the forms of honest and steadfast labour. Let us mark that this narrow and intolerant spirit is emphatically and solemnly condemned by our Lord. "Forbid him not." Whence we may gather—

II. — THAT THE INSTRUCTIONS OF CHRIST RENDER SACRED THE DOMAIN OF GRACIOUS BEGINNINGS.

This man had made little progress in the spiritual life, but he had made some. His knowledge was

others: but let us help every one who is honestly seeking the Lord, even although he be ignorant, and have about him many things far from pleasing to us. You may often have seen a man bearing the burden of the day and bending under the cross of his Lord, to whom some proud professors would hardly allow the name of Christian. There he was; contending with his old weaknesses, bowed down under the habits of a long life, occasionally losing ground but never abandoning the conflict, never calling evil good, rather casting out in the name of Christ the devils of drunkenness, of sensuality, of lust in every form, and really proving by his growing earnestness and sincerity, that there is in him some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel. And yet even good men may have kept a suspicious eye upon him, and refused to him the liberty of casting out devils in the name of the Son of God. Oh! for the compassion, the meekness, the charity of the Master! "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering."[1]

III.—THE DUTY OF A LOVING RECOGNITION OF ALL FORMS OF GOODNESS IS ENJOINED BY

[1] Col. iii. 12.

WHICH WAS ADMINISTERED TO
FOR THEIR MISGUIDED ZEAL.

thing is real union to Christ. This
deep adoration of His name. He
as one sent to destroy the kingdom
he fought under His banner, and
His work. This was, so far as it went,
and the apostles, had they been
the Spirit, would have gladly acknow-
ledged the reality of the works and the promise of
wrought them. But they were so full of
they were so jealous and so sensitive,
and an interdict on him because he did not
in their way In this they acted
to the mind of Christ, and exposed them-
His severe censure. And their error is a
common one, characteristic of almost
of great energy and decision of character.
strongly themselves, and giving themselves
to whatever they undertake at all, they
impatient of every mode of action, of every
character, and of every intellectual opinion
does not harmonise with their own. But
though this feature is more worthy of esteem
than an epicurean neutrality, it is of vital moment
to remember that it is not the will of Christ that
his followers should be blind to other manifesta-
tions of the Christian life than those which are assim-

ilated to their own. It might easily be shewn that non-recognition of other kinds of excellence than our own does not spring from the purest motives, and that it is not the mark of the noblest minds. It springs from a narrow rather than from a large understanding, from imperfect sympathy, from want of insight into the deepest fountains of truth, from ignorance of human character, from virtual denial of the rights of others, and from an unconscious limitation of the Holy Ghost. There are diversities of operations, but the same Spirit; and that Spirit is not confined to any branch of the Church, to any succession of teachers, to any order of worship, or to any confessional symbol. Variety of opinion within scriptural limits is the very life and charm of intellectual progress; diversity of character gives novelty and freshness to Christian families, congregations, and churches; and the inexhaustible methods of spiritual activity are animated by the one Spirit of the Father and the Son, and are made instrumental in the establishment of that kingdom "which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." I believe there is some real and precious principle involved in every opinion held by an honest and earnest Christian man; just as self-denial, holiness, and love are the unquestionable fruits of the Holy Spirit. There is no true church on earth from which some-

[illegible] may not be learnt; and till we [illegible] upon this, not from indifference [illegible] but from earnest conviction, all our [illegible] will remain in their present unsatisfactory, [illegible] state. It is a good thing [illegible] to look at questions from many points [illegible] to put ourselves in the position of others, [illegible] with them in their methods of work, [illegible] in their successes. What [illegible] has this principle to the [illegible] of daily experience! We need [illegible] every manifestation of the [illegible] working out the holy ends of the Church. We need reason and faith, thought and action, [illegible] the stern vigour of manly courage and the womanly graces of long-suffering and self-devotion and loving-kindness. We ought to acknowledge with gladness every fruit of the Spirit, [illegible] appear in whatsoever soil, and be ready to magnify God in others. All real churches have something worthy of our imitation in their government, their methods, their spirit. And the example before us shows that wherever the work of God is being done, there is the assured presence of the Divine Lord and Redeemer.

It is the honour and glory of Christ that we are to seek, not our private or denominational distinction. When we allow personal vanity, or ecclesi-

astical pride, to arise in our hearts, He is deeply displeased, and passes upon us the censure of our text—that we are forbidding others to work in Christ's name, because they follow not with us. When we are cold in our affections to other communions, indifferent to their happiness, jealous of their success, and quietly gratified when we hear of anything to their disparagement, we expose ourselves to the holy anger of our Lord. And there is no better test of the purity of our zeal, and the disinterestedness of our loyalty to the Christian cause, than when we have an unaffected delight in all true workers in the vineyard, and magnify the grace of God in them. So deep, for example, was the devotion of Paul to his Master, and so intense his desire for His glory, that he could say, "What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice."[1] And it ought to enable us to cherish the right spirit, to remember that all who believe in Christ, confess His name, and do His work, are essentially one, and are the helpers of each others' joy. There ought to be no antagonism, no alienation of feeling, and there will be none, when we duly consider that the work is one—the Master the same, and His honour the end of all Christian prayer and effort.

[1] Phil. i. 18.

You will observe that our Lord tempered this rebuke to His disciples with the gracious reminiscence of their unity with Him, by saying, "He that is not against US is for US." Yes! for US, in the fellowship of the one Lord, and in the accomplishment of the work of making men holier, wiser, happier, better fitted for the duties of earth, and more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Co-operation, fellowship, mutual help, and a unity of aim and result, are the law of the spiritual economy; and it is by these that the whole body is to attain its ideal completeness, and to manifest the glory of its Head. Nor is there any test of character so searching and so purifying as this; for it is the highest and the most practical of all tests. Let us seek to have our hearts purified by bringing them to the Master. Let us look upon what is essential, and not upon mere circumstances. Let us ask for an enlarged, a gracious, a tender spirit, and that we may be taught to recognize every true disciple, whatsoever banner he displays and by whatever name he is called. But let us see that our tolerance springs from conviction, from earnestness, from sympathy with human souls, and from a supreme desire for the glory of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Then shall we be saved from that unlovely character, which is fruitful in heresies and schisms, in heart-burning, and alienation, and in

every evil work. Then shall we feel that we are in unison with all true churches, with all faithful labourers, with the glad heralds of salvation in every land, and with that anonymous band, whose works alone record their presence, but whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Then shall we promote that higher unity, which is the result of variety and manifoldness, like the many hues in the resplendent arch that fills the skies when storms begin to part, like the blended odours in a garden of spices, and like the multitudinous voices which form the one grand harmonious and majestic symphony around the Throne.

III.

THE EFFICACY OF THE WORD.

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isaiah lv. 10, 11.

THIS chapter is rich to overflowing with the promises of the gospel. It is God Himself that speaks. He begins with a most gracious invitation. He represents the blessings of salvation by means of the richest products of the Holy Land—wine and milk. He deals with the sinner directly and personally, assuring him of a free, immediate, and abundant pardon. These blessings are so precious, so rich, and so far beyond the hope of man, that He gives two reasons for the amplitude and freeness which shine in them. The first is the heaven-wide elevation of His own thoughts above those of man, and the second is that contained in our text,—the certain returns of His living and imperishable

Word. Relying upon the promised aid of the Holy Ghost, I propose for your consideration this solemn and delightful theme. It is full of comfort to some of us, and may God bless it for the quickening of the spiritually dead!

I. — THE WORD OF GOD; WHAT IT IS IN ITSELF.

1. One cannot fail to notice the inner connection hinted at in the chapter between God's word and His thoughts. God's thoughts! they are often mentioned in Scripture, and always with some attribute of dignity, of purity, of preciousness. They have their origin in His own nature, are the outcome of that nature, and bear the character of those perfections that are the object of our adoration. In the context He claims for them a transcendent and peerless majesty—"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." This is the first conception that we form of God's Word. It is the expression of His thought, the true reflection of His mind, of His will, of His purpose; not a full or adequate expression, for if words fail to convey fully even our thoughts, how utterly insufficient are they to express the abysmal thoughts of the ever-blessed God!

2. The Word of God is embodied and declared

[illegible] Son, our Lord
[illegible] who is called "The
[illegible] was the Word, and the
[illegible] Word was God."[1]
[illegible] not an abstrac-
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[illegible] of Christ. This he
[illegible] prologue to his gospel, once
[illegible] in the Apocalypse.

[illegible]

We may sum up the force of the term thus:—(1) Christ as to His divine nature bears the same relation to the hidden being of God as the Word does to thought. In the word of man the idea or thought takes shape and form and clearness to the mind, and through it the thought is conveyed and made intelligible to others. So the Word is the utterance, the expression of God, the organ of all revelation, both with regard to Himself and the world. (2) Christ makes known the Father—His thoughts—His character—His purposes. (3) Christ gave to His disciples the words which the Father had given unto Him.[1]

3. Holy Scripture, in which the word of God is thus uttered and made known, was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and has been preserved by Him. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The expression "Word of God" has a variety of meanings amid unity of spirit. The essential idea is the manifestation of God Himself. He speaks by all His acts, in creation, in history, in providence, and in grace. The most intense conviction of spiritual men is the view they have of the living personality of God; that which enables them to realise in all nature His presence and

[1] John xvii. 8.

utterances. Above all, the Word of God to them is the Person by whom He made the world, by whom He governs and sustains all His creatures, who was made flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth, and whose glory we beheld — the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.[1] Another meaning we attach to the expression is the declaration of His will. In the minds of Hebrew saints the word of God was the Law authoritatively promulgated on Mount Sinai; and a great part of the exhortations of the Old Testament, in the Pentateuch, the historical books, the Psalms, and the Prophets, which enjoin meditation upon the word of God and which speak of its saving effects, refer to that Law. Yet it must be remembered that those sacred words engraved by the finger of God on the tables of stone, preserved in the ark, and deposited in the Holy of Holies, although they were the centre and foundation of religious teaching, were not the whole word of God; or every revelation made to the patriarchs, every event in which God manifested His character and declared His purpose, every inspired utterance that came from the souls of those men who were chosen and qualified to be the organs of the Holy Ghost, formed part of that word. The New Testament is the final and complete record of the will and dis-

[1] John i. 14.

pensation of the Almighty God—of the acts and words, the humiliation and glory, of His Son Jesus Christ our Redeemer; and it consists chiefly of our Lord's own words, and of those of His apostles speaking and writing under the direction of the Holy Ghost. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."[1]

4. The truth as it is uttered in God's house is also entitled to be called "The Word of God." So long as we draw our doctrine from Scripture, and present it to you in its simplicity and purity, we are speaking the words of God. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Father of Glory, will lead us into all truth. "This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

That word is still "going forth out of the mouth of God." It is not a mere sound or letter, but a living inspiration clothed with divine power, containing the principle of spiritual vitality, running like a swift messenger through the world and into the hearts of men, and issuing in the fulfilment of the behests of the sender. He speaks in the present as truly as He did in the past; not by new revelations, either modifying or changing the old,

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 13.

small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass;"[1] (2) to describe the gracious advent of the Prince of Peace—"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth;"[2] and (3) to denote the refreshment of fellowship with God—"He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."[3]

Snow is frozen vapour; the watery particles congeal into white crystals in the air. When the temperature of the atmosphere sinks below the freezing point, the particles of moisture are then frozen, and formed into flakes, which descend to the earth. These have great diversities of density, and display a boundless variety of most beautiful forms. Accumulated upon high regions, snow serves to feed, by its gradual melting, streams of running water; whereas a sudden increase of the same in the form of rain would convert them into destructive torrents or standing pools. In many countries snow mitigates the burning heats of summer by cooling the breezes which pass over it. In severe climates it protects vegetation from the rigours of frost, and shelters animals which bury themselves under it. There is only one reference in the historical books of the Bible to the actual presence of snow, viz., 2 Samuel xxiii. 20, where, among other

[1] Deut. xxxii. 2. [2] Psalm lxxii. 6. [3] Hosea vi. 3.

valiant acts of Benaiah, we read that "he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in the time of snow." There are, however, many allusions to it in the poetical books and in the Prophets. It illustrates the power of God—"For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth."[1] "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?"[2] The form of the question is ethical, and is regulated according to the infancy of the perception of natural phenomena among the ancients. "He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes."[3] As an emblem of dazzling brilliancy we read that the raiment of the Angel of the Resurrection was white as snow.[4] Our prayer for purity passes into the ardent cry, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;"[5] and the efficacy of God's pardoning grace is thus declared—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."[6]

But it is neither its mysterious origin as a creature of God, nor its dazzling whiteness, nor its exquisite beauty as it lies upon the ground or hangs in crystals from the trees, or clothes with its gleaming mantle

[1] Job xxxvii. 6.
[2] Job xxxviii. 22.
[3] Psalm cxlvii. 16.
[4] Matt. xxviii. 3.
[5] Psalm li. 7.
[6] Isaiah i. 18.

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are often feeble, unreliable, and too weak to effect their purpose, but the word of God is sure and strong. It does not return unto Him void.

In thus illustrating the efficacy of the Word there are two sides or aspects of the truth that ought to be considered. The Gospel is "either the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." The result is different in different cases, but the word is not in vain. It will and must have an effect one way or another. If it do not convince the conscience and soften the heart, it will sear the one and harden the other. If it do not ripen for heaven, it will aggravate our guilt and fit us for destruction. Isaiah himself was sent on a strange errand—"Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed but understand not; and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed."[1] Even in this case, God's word shall not return unto Him void. It yields by its operation in those to whom it is brought proofs that the charge against man is true; it yields fruits of patience, gentleness, prayerful intensity, and holy resignation in those who bear the rejected message; and it produces, by the results of its rejection, the acknowledgement that it

[1] Isaiah vi. 9, 10.

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purposed, and who shall disannul it?"[1] The shallowness of our understanding, our impotence, and the instability of our purposes, cause our best plans to fail. But with Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. That He will accomplish that which He pleases we know from His moral perfection, which requires a correspondence between the promise and performance; from His sovereignty in executing all His purposes without the possibility of failure; from His eternity, which lifts His purposes above the mutable sphere and the shifting phenomena of mundane things; from His absolute independence; and from His omnipotence, which He has pledged for the fulfilment of His promise. "My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."[2]

The Lord further says of His word,—"It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." What a directness and certainty does this saying give to all the promises and truths of the Gospel? For the word of God has not only a general reference to His people; there are special and particular applications to each individual among them. God's word goes forth out of His mouth. It may be the written Word which is in our hands, or it may be the spoken word coming to us through

[1] Isaiah xiv. 27. [2] John x. 29.

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[illegible] in faith, reverence
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[illegible] the Holy Ghost.

As in creation and providence, so is it in grace. He recognizes and weaves into His purposes, the free agency and co-operation of man. Even the rain and the snow will not make the earth fruitful without the labour of man. His word goes forth on its gracious errand, and He will prosper it, but not without you. It is in you, and with you, and through you, that He will accomplish the holy thoughts of His heart. Sloth, inattention, captiousness, a cold and barren criticism, and unbelief, are not only unworthy of thoughtful men, but are also sin against the Holy Ghost. "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

The Word then is equal to the task that God has laid upon it. It is vital, certain, and unchangeable. It has not lost its power any more than Nature, which shows no signs of age, of palsy, or consumption. The sea has enough of water to float its ships. The lightning is as vivid, and the thunder is as loud as ever. The rain and the snow are as plentiful, and as beneficent as ever they were. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth."

What, let me ask, is the measure of your returns. God's word has a true return in every one of His people; but the returns differ, oh! how widely, "in some thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundred fold." Whose faith is as strong as it ought to be? Whose hope is as clear? Whose love as warm, and

IV.

NEHEMIAH'S PRACTICAL PIETY.

"So did not I, because of the fear of God."—Nehemiah v. 15.

THE book, with the inscription, "The words (or matters) of Nehemiah," relates how he, the cup-bearer of the King Artaxerxes, in the twentieth year of his reign, found a motive for returning to his native land, and obtained leave to do so; and how, after his return to Jerusalem, he carried out his plan of rebuilding the city walls and restoring its gates, in spite of the opposition of the Samaritans; how he restrained usury among the Jews, escaped a plot which had been laid for his murder, and resolved to gather a larger population into the capital. These events occupy the first six chapters and part of the seventh. On this occasion he found a register of the exiles who had returned with Zerubbabel, which he has inserted. Next comes a description of the reading of the law by Ezra, at the Feast of Tabernacles, and of the renovation of

as transforming? Who
full, and as purifying a
might be? Who is air
of spirituality, of assu
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the gracious purposes
tender and efficacious
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d groaned under
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Those who had no
their families; and
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King's tribute, com-

[1] Chap. xiii.

ıey must now give their sons and
.lavery. Nehemiah, when he heard
:as angry with the rulers, and, calling
xposed their injustice and inhumanity,
:m to restore to their brethren their
.nd and their money,—an appeal to
responded with prompt and steadfast
.Also I shook my lap, and said, So God
.very man from his house, and from his
t performeth not this promise, even thus
.en out and emptied. And all the con-
said, Amen, and praised the Lord.
people did according to this promise." [1]
is point that Nehemiah records the unself-
in which he fulfilled the office of governor
.e years, during the whole period of which
.' no allowances from the community, and
t eat the bread of the people. It had not
.o with his predecessors, who were a heavy
.ı to the people, who "had taken bread and
'rom them, beside forty shekels of silver: yea,
their servants bare rule over them"; implying
:hose former rulers had abused their power for
›urposes of extortion and self-indulgence. The
›n why he acted differently is given in the brief
emphatic sentence,—"But so did not I, because
ıe fear of God."

[1] Verse 13.

the covenant; the acc
population was augm
families who dwelt in t
country;[1] the insertic
ical lists;[2] the record
walls; his own return
second year of Arta
the abuses which hac
his absence.[3] These
pose the book. Of
historical truthfulne
although Nehemiah
from us the noble o
a character which
all its pages, and av
and our affection.

The events record
chapter took place d
Zealously as the ruler
the community carri
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found living high in
the exactions of their
tent and the cry of
property demanded
those who had pledg
procure bread and

[1] Chap. xi.

verty. If the readiness with which the
gave back their lands, their vineyards, their
rds, and their houses, reminds us of con-
Zacchæus,[1] the richer excellence of Nehe-
akes us think of the like-minded apostle—
we not power to eat and to drink? But
used none of these things, neither have I
n these things, that it should be so done unto
or it were better for me to die, than that any
hould make my glorying void."[2] Nehemiah's
restedness appeared in generous acts of
ality. He fed a hundred and fifty persons
table, at his own expense, and so unaffected
is conviction of his perfect unselfishness that
ounded upon it the prayer—"Think upon me,
od, for good, according to all that I have
for this people."[3]

Jews were happy in having a statesman
vout, so resolute, and so sagacious, with the
f God in his soul and Jerusalem graven on
most heart. He was richly endowed with
ntellectual and practical powers, and had
n genius for government; but with all his
s and caution, his fertility of resource, and
ity of action, there was a vein of poetry in
l a fountain of enthusiasm ready to well
to overflow whenever the occasion came.

[1] xix. 8. [2] 1 Cor. ix. 4, 15. [3] Verse 19.

[illegible] and all per-
[illegible] patriotism free
[illegible] from ignoble
[illegible] those nations
[illegible] capacity, animated
[illegible] devotion to their
[illegible] and if through
[illegible] people fail to
[illegible] value.

[illegible]INCIPLE APPLIED TO

[illegible] predecessors had acted.
[illegible] natives of a foreign domin-
[illegible] habit of making a gain of
[illegible] charging the maintenance of
[illegible] to the people, already
[illegible] ground down by exactions.
[illegible] made a stand. It seemed
[illegible] but the Jewish governor
[illegible] a great principle. It was
[illegible] recognized as a custom, and acted
[illegible] gone before him. Still it was
[illegible] custom could never make it right,
[illegible] might be pled as an extenuation
[illegible] offenders. When Nehemiah let in
[illegible] of God's law, and tried it by his
[illegible] lightened, he found it to be wholly

bad, unjust, and cruel, opposed alike to the will of God and to every true instinct of a patriot. Reverence for the holy name of God, a sensitive apprehension of offending Him, and a desire to glorify Him in the eyes of others, led him to subdue every mean feeling, and every emotion of selfish desire, to act a noble part in the high place which he filled, and to transmit to his successors the office of governor augmented in honour and radiant with the lustre of a blameless and uncorrupted reputation. The lesson reaches not those who are high in station only, but every man in the fulfilment of common daily duties. Your work may be servile, but you can make it noble by doing it in the spirit of Christian freedom. Your circumstances may be narrow, but you can expand them by the cultivation of a large and generous sympathy. Your opportunities may be few, but diligence, energy, spirituality, and self-sacrifice will multiply their number and enhance their value. It is of the utmost importance to live to God in small things, and to have the principle of our text for the animating motive of every action.

We use the words "great" and "small" in speaking of occasions, plans, duties, and events without any adequate idea of their relative importance, and often merely upon grounds of outward appearance and first impression. An event apparently small may be to

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communion with Him, recognition of His will, and a simple desire to glorify Him in every sphere, however humble—in every work, however small—in every duty, however commonplace. Nehemiah did it by a noble self-denial, and by a princely generosity; let us do it by discharging the duties of our station in "simplicity and godly sincerity," whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, doing all to the glory of God.

"Oh, could we learn that sacrifice,
What lights would all around us rise!
How would our hearts with wisdom talk
Along life's dullest, dreariest walk!

"We need not bid, for cloistered cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell;
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky:

"The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves—a road
To bring us daily nearer God."[1]

III.—Of the necessity of daring to be singular in matters of conscience.

Nehemiah was singular in his simplicity and purity of action, as well as in its motive. "So DID NOT I, because of the fear of God."

There are some people so good-natured, or so

[1] 'The Christian Year;" Morning.

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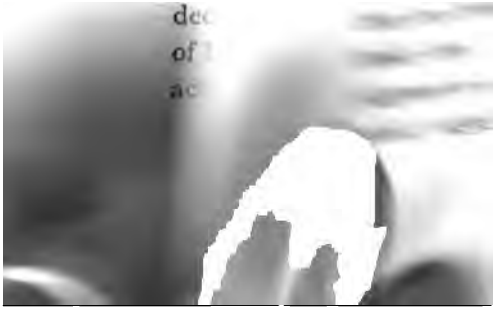

appearance, and neither dazzled by the glare of worldly splendour, nor seduced by the fascinations of carnal pleasure. He is singular in his walk and conversation, particularly in his care to avoid sin and the occasions of it; in his abstinence from many gratifications in which others indulge, which they regard as lawful, if not laudable; in his solicitude for the good of souls and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Believers, in short, are singular in their origin, their principles, their dispositions, their habits, their hopes, their fears, their pursuits, and their privileges. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."[1]

But the singularity, of which our passage is so notable an illustration, refers chiefly to right conduct, springing out of the fear of God. And in this, Nehemiah had some inspiriting forerunners, as well as a bright array of followers. Noah, who stood firm as a rock amid the wild surges of popular tumult; Joseph, who bore shame and imprisonment rather than defile his purity; Moses, who, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Joshua, who said, "As for me and my house, we will serve

[1] 1 Peter ii. 9, 10.

[illegible] judges like Samuel and prophets like [illegible] these were among the great cloud of witnesses by whose example Nehemiah was encouraged. But the time would fail us to tell of the [illegible] who have come after him, and who have walked through reproach, persecution, and death to the golden gates of the New Jerusalem, the glorious company of the apostles, and the noble army of the martyrs, the confessors and the champions of every age of the Christian Church.

The necessity of a stern and unbending refusal to comply with worldly maxims and practices, arises from many causes. Our own inclinations and desires will turn us into sin if we do not resist and subdue them. The world is full of things not attractive and bad, which will prove bad if we yield to them. Many of the people with whom we are brought into contact are very corrupting and breathe poison wherever they go. Crimes are a snare for the young and inexperienced, who will be wise if they remember the wholesome admonition, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." And, behind all these, there is your adversary, the devil, who goeth about as a roaring lion, "seeking whom he may devour," whom resist steadfast in the faith."[2]

[1] Prov. i. 10. [2] 1 Peter v. 8, 9.

IV.—In conclusion, let us observe that THE FEAR OF GOD, AS A MOTIVE TO GOODNESS AND TO A DISCRIMINATING DEPARTURE FROM EVIL MEN AND EVIL COURSES, HAS MANY ELEMENTS OF EXCELLENCE AND ATTRACTION.

It is a noble motive. It is not the slavish fear of an Almighty avenger that is meant by "the fear of God"—the shrinking aversion and alienation of the heart from one whom we hate and dread, but out of whose hands we cannot get away. No high morality, and no true religious emotion, ever sprang from a root so bitter and ignoble. That "fear of the Lord," which is the beginning of wisdom and the germ of piety, embraces profound reverence for His name, child-like trust in His love, a sweet repose in His manifested excellence, and a desire for His honour so pure and so tender as to shrink with ingenuous shame from the very approach of sin. It increases with the growth of knowledge, of affection, and of fellowship; sometimes passing beyond the measures of ordinary grace, and blending with the ascriptions of the heavenly host. It is highest in the highest, and finds its best expression in acts of glorifying worship, in soft walking with God, and in a life conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The impulse of duty, the solemn

sponsibility, aspirations after an ideal and the desire to please Him whose ve, are only expressions of this inner l right action and noble living.

tive strong in its fundamental principle. many motives that exhaust themselves nt of a firm and abiding root. But the Lord takes its characteristic strength ject—God Himself. Every principle that ot in Him, every exercise of the intellect or its object His character, every affection out towards Him as its resting-place and every moral activity that has Him for its f operation, has elements always strong uring. I have not traced the genesis of ce, nor analysed it into its several parts, h fear of God as Nehemiah had was evi- he work of the Holy Spirit, not the mere e of nature. It was a fruit of regeneration, a living union to God Himself; and hence strong in its inherent vigour, and capable y exercise and of every sacrifice. It was powerful as a practical energy than any other nce whatever. Men have done many things red more, from motives that were not good though they were strong. Lust, ide, the desire for wealth, and the love n, have enabled them to endure hard-

ships and to overcome difficulties apparently insurmountable. Nevertheless, the fear of God and the love of Jesus have proved not only the purest and loftiest, but also the most powerful motives that ever animated the soul and impelled the will of man. Strong in elements of intrinsic worth, it is an abiding principle of action; never loses its hold, and never turns to weariness and failure.

It is a motive commensurate with the whole extent of duty, sufficient for all the circumstances and varieties of human life. It is applicable not only to religion in the strict sense of the word, but to every moral action also. The pursuit of knowledge, the prosecution of business, professional, mechanical, and manual toil, the discharge of relative duties, personal respect and dignity of character—all come under the guidance of this master principle, which strengthens and ennobles them all. It is ubiquitous in its presence, all-pervading in its scope, suitable alike for heroical situations and common occurrences, and while embracing in its majestic sweep the entire circle of ethical relations, it gives to every duty a value not to be measured by the sphere of its operation, but by its relation to God, and to man as the subject of His government and the child of His love.

Finally, *it is an expansive and transforming motive.* It opens out and stretches far away into

all the varying experiences of the regenerate life, and it lifts us higher and nearer to God with every exercise. The grace itself does not exist alone, but allies itself with all the fruits of the Spirit, with all the faculties of our nature, and with the power now working in them that believe; till passing into perfect love, it fashions the soul after the image of the Saviour, and prepares it for the beatific vision of the Lamb. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."[1]

[1] Malachi iii. 16, 17.

V.

JEHU'S FALSE ZEAL.

"And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD."—2 Kings x. 16.

JEHU, the son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi, was originally one of the guards of Ahab, and was known to the prophet Elijah, to whom he was mentioned as the future king of Israel and the minister of vengeance upon the house of Ahab. About the time when he became prominent, Jehoram, the reigning king, the son of Ahab, having come down to recover Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians, had received a severe wound which compelled him to retire. He returned to Jezreel, accompanied by his brother-in-law Ahaziah, king of Judah, leaving the army under the charge of Jehu his captain, who was sitting in the camp among his officers, when there suddenly entered a youth of wild appearance, demanding a private audience. They retired into a secret chamber. The young man, who was one of the sons of the prophets, took out a flask of oil, and

pouring it out upon his head, said unto him, "Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel." Jehu told his officers the high destiny that was before him, and they with the faithlessness so characteristic of courtiers, threw off their allegiance to the house of Jehoram, and acknowledged Jehu. "Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king."[1]

Formerly he had been known as a furious driver, and now he literally swept to Jezreel. The two kings went out to meet him—Joram he smote with an arrow drawn from the bow with his full strength; Ahaziah was struck at Gur, and died at Megiddo. Jezebel had survived her husband by a period of fourteen years, and was still a great personage at the court of her son. There is a tragic grandeur in her death, worthy of the dramatic genius of Greece. She was in the palace which stood in the gate of the city, and she determined to confront the destroyer of her race. She painted her eyes, tired her head, and, looking down proudly upon him from the high-latticed window, asked with bitter scornful taunt—"Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" But at his command two or three of the eunuchs of the palace dashed their aged mistress to the

[1] 2 Kings ix. 13.

ground, whose blood was sprinkled over the palace wall behind, and over the advancing armies in front, and the last remains of life were trampled out by the horses' hoofs.

This first day's atrocities were promptly followed up. Jehu wrote letters to Samaria causing seventy of Ahab's sons who were there to be put to death, slew all his great men, his kinsfolk, and his priests, until he left him none remaining. On his return journey to Samaria he met forty-two of the "brethren" (a general phrase including step-brothers, nephews, and cousins) of Ahaziah; all these he massacred on the spot. The murder of these relatives of Ahaziah in cold blood at the pit of the shearing house recalls the horrors of Cawnpore, and reveals the remorseless cruelty of such natures as that of Jehu. It was on his departure from the fatal spot where these victims fell that he lighted on Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, whom he saluted—"Is thine heart right as my heart is with thy heart?" And Jehonadab answered, "It is," and gave his hand to the king, who took him into his chariot, and said to him, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD."

Jehu's subsequent conduct was in harmony with the beginning of his reign. He destroyed the worshippers of Baal and Ashtaroth by means of a cruel strategy, burnt their images, and threw down their temple. But the schismatical idolatrous estab-

[redacted]

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nature and extent. He had heard the curse denounced upon the wicked family of Ahab—"Thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel." It often occurs that men of a rough and hasty disposition understand clearly a particular task laid upon them, when others purer, more noble, and more addicted both to intellectual and moral refinement, hesitate, balance considerations, and involve themselves in ever deepening mazes of incertitude and doubt. Jehu knew the work he had to do.

2. He showed great promptitude and indubitable energy in doing it. The shout of the willing soldiers —"Jehu is king," roused the savage impulses of his nature, and he accepted his position at once. He lost not a moment. His indefatigable activity—his ubiquitous presence—the swift execution of the command to destroy the dynasty of Ahab and the priests of Baal, who had filled the land with nameless abominations—the personal courage and fertility of resource through which he rendered resistance impossible, and by which he rushed on to the final accomplishment of his task—all this was so remarkable that we do not marvel he should have thought it, and called it, zeal. A willingness to sacrifice ease and rest to encounter

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ignoble and even unholy passion, were fatal to the purity of his zeal, and ultimately destroyed his whole character.

II. — For let us now consider WHEREIN HIS ZEAL WAS FALSE.

1. There was too evidently a delight in his bloody work; and this, not because of the command of God, but because it was in harmony with his own cruel and unrelenting disposition. We do not condemn him for punishing the house of Ahab, for it deserved the severe judgments of the Most High, and he obeyed the necessity laid upon him by the mysterious person who consecrated him to the office of king. But we do blame him for his gratuitous severity, and utterly abhor his blood-thirsty rapacity and all-consuming vengeance. He was not unwilling to plunge into scenes of revolting cruelty; and while he had a fearful work to do, it was not in his commission to execute it with such disregard of the claims of gratitude, the instincts of humanity, and the moral ends of punitive judgment. Uniting profound secrecy with savage atrocity, professed zeal for the Lord with a thirst for private vengeance, he pursued his work without pity and without remorse. Why did he not regard it as the burden of the Lord, and carry it with grief, with pain, and with anguish?

peril, to organize difficult enterprises, to endure bodily fatigue, and not to stop short till the end be attained and the work be done, is essential to the accomplishment of great undertakings, whatever may be their moral value. And this rough and somewhat ruffianly captain, scouring the country in search of the members of an ill-fated family, and not shrinking from intrigue and stratagem when open violence failed, sets us an example of unsparing industry, and of unswerving determination to fulfil his purpose.

3. Nor may we refer to utter baseness his cruel and impetuous cruelty. There may have been in his zeal some hatred of hypocrisy, some desire for reality, much impatience of the fatuities and degrading vices of the Baal worship, and some honest determination to put it down. Men are neither angels nor devils,—in the best there is much evil, and in the worst there are some elements of good. But unless there be a real regeneration of the heart and a thorough repentance towards God, even the good that is in men will grow weaker, and in many instances will disappear altogether.

The zeal of Jehu had these things worthy of commendation—a clear perception of his duty, marvellous energy in doing it, and some degree of rough and honest antagonism to idolatry. But the absence of higher principles, and the open

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[illegible] of the Lord, but their zeal may be after all [illegible] themselves—for their own reputation, [illegible] their own amusement.

[illegible] is a searching theme for us all. [illegible] zeal of the Lord." Is it a pure, disinterested, and self-sacrificing zeal? Self-devotion is the very essence of true zeal. The word and the [illegible] are not in the highest esteem; [illegible] in the minds of many with [illegible], imprudence, want of [illegible]. Yet the term denotes [illegible] a quality of grace [illegible] and which was a feature [illegible] character of the Man Christ [illegible] emulation which ever [illegible] excellence. It is the opposite [illegible] which would [illegible] its own level, and of [illegible] church, was so offensive to the glorified Redeemer as to fill Him with horror and utter loathing. "So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."[1] It has unhappily been identified with jealousy that morbid and cruel passion which breeds suspicion, impatience of rivals, hatred, and revenge even unto death. But the jealousy of God is a holy zeal for His own

[1] Rev. iii. 16.

glory, and is the righteousness that cannot bear iniquity, the fire of holiness which either purifies or consumes. True zeal—that which is produced by the Holy Spirit, and was exemplified by the Incarnate Saviour—is a holy, self-sacrificing, and fervent affection of the soul, and self-devotion, of which Jehu was totally devoid, is its holy essence. His passion was strong enough; but it consumed others, whereas the zeal of Christ consumed Himself. Is yours of this self-effacing kind? And in your most earnest efforts do you forget yourselves, and dedicate yourselves wholly to God?

3. In all true zeal there is indignation against sin, but in that of Jehu there was nothing more than a superficial impatience with the disgusting immoralities of the Baal worship. It could not be written of him as it has been of the early heroes of our Scottish faith :—

> "And with the virgin-knight there came
> A preacher, burning with the flame
> Of righteous wrath, whose lofty sense
> Of wrong, blazed forth in eloquence
> Of that God-kindled ire
> Which is consuming fire. * * * *
>
> For still beneath his wrath there lay
> A love that wasted him away,
> And kneeling on the minster-stones
> Burnt up the marrow of his bones,
> As day and night he cried
> For men that sinned and died."[1]

[1] *Dunblane Cathedral*, by Dr. W. C. Smith, *Good Words*, 1875.

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judgments. It did not lead him to seek the will of God in other things, or to promote His glory. He walked in the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He fostered the worship of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, and identified himself with the policy of his wicked predecessors. Had his zeal been sound at the core, had it been the outcome of his inner life, had it sprung from a regard to the will of God, it would have given unity to his royal administration of the kingdom, and he would have inaugurated a complete reform throughout the land. But it never went beyond the infliction of punishment on the house of Ahab, which coincided with his cruel disposition and advanced his dynastic ambitions.

Let us see that the objects of our zeal are as wide, as various, and as many as the revealed objects of God's will. It is the peculiar danger of this intense emotion to run into narrow channels, and to become partial and one-sided. And I readily grant that we cannot be equally zealous about all things that are good. We are allowed to select some objects as specially our own, and to these we may lawfully give our best affections and strongest efforts. There is ample room in the Kingdom of God for all varieties of talent, while in the direction these are to follow, aptitude, predilection, training, and environment must be taken into

account. But according to our opportunity we must embrace in our zeal all the objects presented to us in the revealed will of God.

Among these objects let the following be taken as crucial examples. It is to be a zeal for the *honour of God*; for whatever touches *that* awakens the ardour of holy beings, and creates both indignation at the wrong and desire for the manifestation of His glory. Then, earnest solicitude for the *purity of His worship* naturally flows out of concern for God's honour, and we shall endeavour to maintain its integrity, and cherish its spirituality, worshipping Him according to the pattern shown to us on the Mount.

The *Kingdom of Christ* will naturally be the great object of our prayer and labour. We shall seek its establishment, its extension, its perpetuity, while we shall be specially jealous for the crown-rights and royal prerogatives of Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Messiah the Prince, and Governor among the nations. Yes, brethren, if we have any deep attachment to His Person, we shall be zealous, even to jealousy, of every attempt to invade His blood-bought rights, and shall regard it as one of our most sacred trusts to maintain the freedom, the spirituality, and the independence of His Kingdom in the world—the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all.

Still further, true zeal is indissolubly bound up with the exercise of *sorrow for sin*. Hence the solemn command, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent."[1] And hence among the gracious fruits of godly sorrow we find these: "For behold this self same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge."[2] *Spiritual gifts*, too, are proper objects of a holy zeal. "But covet earnestly the best gifts."[3] "Desire spiritual gifts."[4] Finally, *the everlasting blessedness of others* ought to be ever before us as a worthy object of our constant and ever-growing desire.

5. This zeal of Jehu's was conjoined with contemptuous disobedience of the Divine commandments.

The historian adds: "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart." His zeal was not the expression of inward devotion to God, and therefore it was quite compatible with carelessness, with rebellion, and with a loose and immoral life.

If our zeal is an emotion truly arising from self-devotion and hatred of evil, really embracing all the objects of God's glory, it will have a purifying and

[1] Rev. iii. 19.
[2] 2 Cor. vii. 11.
[3] 1 Cor. xii. 31.
[4] 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

transforming influence upon character. It will make us humble, diligent in every duty, affectionate to others, and wholly obedient to the will of God. We must test the purity of our zeal by bringing it to the standard of the Divine law. You may have an apparent earnestness, you may be vehement in denouncing the sins of others, you may take much interest in the Church and about the things of God, you may be valiant in defence of your principles, and grudge no personal labour or expense in their dissemination, you may have the reputation of great devotion, energy, and self-denial in promoting Christian ends, but unless your zeal makes you holier, more humble, more noble-minded, more Christ-like in your spirit and walk, I do not say that you are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, yet it must be said your ardour resembles the zeal of Jehu, who took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, rather than that of Him who always did the things which pleased His Father in heaven.

Let us take care that we never excuse sin, nor attempt to compound for practical ungodliness by the profession of great zeal for the Lord. You know how wide-spread is the suspicion with which zealous men are regarded; how eagerly they are watched; how every departure from rectitude is noted; how loud is the cry when they are detected

in any dishonourable transaction; and how grievous is the injury done to the interests of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yet, on the other hand, let us never be discouraged from the cultivation of this grace by the fear of being inconsistent, or by any evil remembrance of the inconsistency of others. Let us, least of all, be held back by unworthy thoughts of its nature and place. Christ requires the warmth, intensity, earnestness, and enthusiasm of zeal. He exemplified it in His own earthly life. His Spirit formed it in the hearts of the Apostles, and all through the creative and reviving epochs of the Church's history the true followers of the Lord have been full of zeal for His glory in the salvation of men.

VI.

THE ATONEMENT—SOME EVIDENCES OF ITS EFFICACY.

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."—Hebrews i. 3.

THERE are few portions of Scripture equally brief which contain so many and so precious doctrines, as the verse before us. The essential unity of the Son with the Father; His personality; His creative majesty; His atoning work; and His mediatorial session on the right hand of God, are all emphatically declared in this passage. I have, however, chosen it as the subject of discourse to-day, for the purpose of bringing before you the evidences it suggests of the reality and efficacy of the atonement, thus bringing to a close the present series of discourses.[1]

The writer of this epistle has devoted the noblest energies of his nature to the elucidation of our

[1] This was the last of a series of six discourses on the Atonement.

Lord's priesthood. Although not formally systematic, there is method of the highest kind in his treatment of it, and the foundation of the Work of Christ is laid in a profound recognition of His Person. The Saviour of sinners, the High-priest of our profession, is the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, who upholdeth all things by the word of His power. It is this Divine Being, the essential image of the Father, and His representative image to us, who has by Himself purged our sins. The purification (καθαρισμός) which the incarnate Son of God brought in, was the gracious atonement for guilt which He effected when He by one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified. This purgation is final and complete, and one of the evidences of its perfect and everlasting efficacy is that He "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."

The "right hand" is never used of our Lord's pre-existent co-equality with the Father, but always with reference to His exaltation in His humanity, after His course of suffering and triumph, and denotes His mediatorial reward as the representative, and forerunner of the many sons whom He is to bring to glory. To be on the right hand of the Majesty on high implies a fellowship with God both in honour and in actual dominion. The heavenly

heights must be illocal so far as the Divine Essence is concerned, but the glorified body of the Redeemer must exist in some place. Into these heights, and into the inner blessedness of God has the glorified Jesus entered; a real heaven, the place where God manifests His glory to the unfallen angels—those elder sons of light,—and to those countless multitudes who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Let us proceed to consider :—

I.—THE EXALTATION OF JESUS as a proof of the efficacy of His atonement.

His being raised from the dead by the glory of His Father was a proof that God accepted the sacrifice as a real, perfect, and complete propitiation for sin. His resurrection was wrought by the power of God, but by power in harmony with righteousness and love; hence it is said, it was "the God of peace" who brought Him again from the dead, and that this took place "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." His exaltation beginning in His revival from the dead, was continued in His ascension, and consummated by His sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that

which is to come."[1] That His triumphant return to the throne of God, is an evidence of the efficacy of His atonement, is represented in symbol, predicted in prophecy, and declared to be His present and abiding state. The entry of the Jewish high-priest into the holy of holies once every year was a type of Him of whom it is said, "He is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself."[2] The psalms represent His glory as accruing from His sufferings, and it is this which makes such psalms as the twenty-second and the hundred-and-tenth so complete a representation of His whole mediatorial work. The mingled sorrow and joy in these sublime odes prepare us for a deeper appreciation of the indissoluble connection between the death and life of the Redeemer. This beautiful bond of union is sealed by the plain statement of Scripture, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" His glory could be reached only through anguish, pain, and death. Surely then, His ascent to the right hand of the Majesty on high is an unanswerable proof that His sufferings have accomplished all the ends for which they were appointed by the Father, and endured by Him. This truth is clear from the words of the apostle, "Wherefore God also hath

[1] Ephes. i. 21. [2] Heb. ix. 2.

highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."[1]

II.—HIS INTERCESSION BEFORE THE THRONE OF THE HEAVENLY MAJESTY is another evidence.

Intercession is the correlative and complement of atonement. It is based upon the propitiation, and from it draws its right, its power, and its most persuasive arguments. The connection is clearly indicated by Paul, when, having told us that there is "one mediator between God and men," he immediately adds, "who gave himself a ransom for all."[1] It is repeated by John, when, after assuring us that "if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," he declares the ground of our Advocate's efficacious pleading, "And he is the propitiation for our sins."[2] In like manner, we find in the visions of the Apocalypse a representation of the glorified Redeemer in the character of a "Lamb as it had been slain," clearly proving how close is the connection between the expiatory death of Jesus and the transcendent dignity in which He now makes continual intercession for us. It is further seen from the fact that His intercession is priestly, that He makes effectual His atonement, and that He discharges His mediatory work in behalf of those for whom He died. What evidence

[1] Phil. ii. 9. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. [3] 1 John ii. 1, 2.

can be stronger for confirming our trust in His one sacrifice, seeing that "this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."[1] Let the desponding believer ever look to the "Great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God."[2] Here is the living evidence that His work was perfect, and that He is able to save them "that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."[3] And how impressive is the argument drawn from the sublime continuity of our Lord's redeeming work. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."[4]

III.—THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT AND HIS ABIDING PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH is another proof.

There is a nice question in theology, whether the grace of the Holy Ghost was purchased by Christ or comes to us in the exercise of His own gracious freedom. I do not like the expression "purchased" as applied to any of the movements of God. And remembering that the Holy Spirit is essentially God, and equal to the Father and Son in majesty, eternity, and in all adorable perfection, it is well for us to

[1] Heb. vii. 24.
[2] Heb. iv. 14.
[3] Heb. vii. 25.
[4] Rom. viii. 34.

ascribe unto Him the same loving-kindness which it is our privilege and delight to ascribe unto them. At the same time, the words of Christ on the coming of the Comforter are so emphatic, though mysterious withal, that we must not attempt to explain them away. Messiah, when He came, was to baptize with the Holy Ghost.[1] Referring to one of His own sayings, John adds, Jesus spake this "of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."[2] The glorification of Christ was to be through His meritorious obedience and atoning death, and thus there is a vital connection between that death and the gift of the Holy Ghost. His closing discourses are even more strikingly illustrative of the connection. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you."[3] "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter."[4] The coming of the Holy Ghost is thus expressly connected with His intercession, which again is founded upon His true and proper atonement. The promise was literally fulfilled, and the inspired apostle caught a wonderful insight into the mysterious dispensation when he said, "Therefore, being

[1] Matt. iii. 11.
[2] John vii. 39.
[3] John xvi. 7-9.
[4] John xiv. 16.

by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."[1] To the same effect it is said that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. . . . That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."[2] The true nature or ultimate ground of the connection between the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost is to us quite incomprehensible. The economy of the spiritual world, however, being as certainly regulated by immutable laws of Divine wisdom as that of the world of sensible experience, we may conceive the one event to have been as necessary a pre-condition to the other as the members of any physical sequence. The great facts are equally true, however we may explain them. Our theologies change, but the truths of the spiritual kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are rooted in His person and inherent in His nature; they do not change, but remain the same "yesterday, to-day, and forever." In whatever way we may interpret the relation between His work and the coming of the Holy Ghost, let us cleave to His

[1] Acts ii. 33. [2] Gal. iii. 13, 14.

precious promise, and rejoice that in the indwelling and witness of the Spirit we have the most consolatory evidence of the all-sufficiency and undying power of that one offering whereby "he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."[1]

IV.—A further argument for the efficacy of our Lord's death is to be found IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE HIM.

This is a line of proof that is perfectly legitimate, and that issues in the most delightful conclusiveness. It can, however, be appreciated only by those who are trusting in Him as their Redeemer and Saviour. Let us enquire into their testimony. One of the effects of His atonement is that it gives peace to the conscience. Most of us know the misery of a troubled, restless, and accusing conscience. We have learned also how impossible it is to obtain sure and abiding peace by the use of ordinary remedies. We may have tried forgetfulness, busy occupation, variety of scene, wilder plunges into sin, an affectation of indifference, expressions of sorrow, diligence in waiting on the means of grace, sacrifices, or steady amendment. These, however, did not give us true rest. Guilt lay still upon the conscience. The past was very bitter and very heavy. The future was

[1] Heb. x. 14.

filled with visions of wrath and coming judgment. Renouncing every attempt at self-justification, and casting ourselves entirely on Christ, we found rest to our souls. We became conscious of pardon, of reconciliation, of peace. We entered into rest which we have ever since found to be solid in its foundation, entire in its extent, and most blessed in its exercise. That peace, however, was found only in the blood, the sacrifice, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and now we can take up and repeat with the solemn and impressive earnestness of redeemed souls the argument of Scripture :—" If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."[1] Thus we see how the living Church of God is the witness on earth to the perfection of our Lord's one sacrifice for sins.

V. Again, THE HOLINESS OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE CHRIST is a strong proof of the efficacy of His atonement.

The highest form of purity and spiritual morality flows from the Cross. Its practical tendency is to

[1] Heb. ix. 13-14.

make men holy in heart, in life, and in conversation. In and with Christ believers die to sin, in its root, in its habit, and in its prevalence. The blood of Christ has not only an expiatory and atoning virtue to satisfy Divine justice, and to effect a real propitiation, it also possesses a cleansing power to purify the soul, and to fit it for heavenly blessedness. It has an intrinsic efficiency for this very end, and when applied to the soul by the Holy Spirit it never fails to transform it into the image of the Lord. Christ is made unto us not only righteousness but also sanctification. The final end of the Father's electing love was that we might be holy before Him. This is the ultimate aim of His work. "Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."[1]

The third Person in the glorious Trinity regenerates and sanctifies the soul by His perpetual indwelling. The work of Christ has a direct tendency to produce holiness by its revelations of the character of God; by the light it sheds upon the majesty, spirituality, and exceeding breadth of the law;

[1] Eph. v. 25-27.

by removing our guilt, which was an insuperable barrier to all spiritual progress; by supplying new motives to obedience in the gratitude, love, and complacency in God, which all the followers of His Son cherish, and by holding out the reward of grace as an incentive to continuance in well doing. By the last consideration alone, the holy tendency of the Cross might be vindicated from all licentious perversions. For what a motive to a holy life is this gracious promise of reward! Even the consecrated Paul felt it to be an overmastering stimulus to arduous and constant effort—"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."[1] His eye of faith saw from afar the gleaming diadem—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day."[2]

But the reality and depth of evangelical holiness, as seen in the actual life of believers, is a living and abiding evidence of the efficacy of our Lord's atoning work. If it does not produce these fruits in all, it is because so many do not receive Christ truly, and have no personal and experimental knowledge of His propitiation. It is impossible to know the blessedness of pardoning and redeeming mercy without feeling a glow of apostolic enthusiasm—"The love of Christ constraineth us," and

[1] Phil. iii. 14. [2] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

"How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" It greatly concerns us all to prove both the sincerity of our faith, and the transcendent efficacy of our Lord's atonement, by maintaining "good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Is so serious a charge brought against the vital article of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," as that it makes men sin because grace aboundeth? Let us refute the charge by keeping the commandments, by following holiness, by purifying ourselves even as Christ is pure, so that "they who speak against us as evil doers, may be led by our good works which they shall behold to glorify God in the day of visitation."[1]

VI.—THE CLEAR AND SURE HOPE OF HEAVEN CHERISHED BY BELIEVERS IN THE HOUR OF DEATH is another proof of the efficacy of our Lord's atoning work.

To die with calmness and with fortitude is not in itself an evidence of the power of the Cross. Fanatics have been prodigal of life. Contempt of death was formulated into a dogma by the Stoics, and carried into practice with consummate resolution, and with a logical consistency that made fearful havoc of the instincts of poor human nature. All religions

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 12.

have had their martyrs; and the victims that were crushed beneath the wheels of Juggernaut, spilt their blood amid insane and ferocious scenes of revelry. The callings of sailors and soldiers can be pursued honourably only by vividly realizing the possible nearness of death. But when we declare that the death of the believer is a testimony to the efficacy of the atonement of our Lord, we lift it to an immeasureable height above blind fanaticism, proud self-contentment, or even professional courage. Think, brethren, of the clear perception of the dying saint, who says, "I know whom I have believed," "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."[1] Mark his purity, his affection, his chastened resignation to the will of God, his tender concern for others, his touching gratitude for the smallest kindness, his victory over fear, over pain, over disquietude. Consider above all, his hope—"Christ in you the hope of glory." Now, on what does he rely? What is the source of his peace? What is the ground of his confidence? Let him belong to what church he may, live in whatever land, or at whatever time. Ask him such questions, and the answer will be in substance the same for all, however the words of each may vary—"The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law, but

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 37.

thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is to say, because our Redeemer has magnified the law, abolished guilt, brought in everlasting righteousness, He has secured for all His followers victory over death. The language of Paul's holy triumph; his, "I am now ready to be offered;" his, "I know whom I have believed," have been repeated and re-echoed by many a departing saint in every age of the Christian Church, since Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who suffered martyrdom A.D. 167, when he was bound to the stake blessed the Lord, saying, "I praise Thee for all things, I glorify Thee, by the high-priest, Jesus Christ, Thy well-beloved Son." The dying words of Samuel Rutherford have been thus paraphrased :—

"I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

"Whatever be the issue of this illness," said one, "my hope is in the finished work of Jesus Christ." "A sinner saved by grace—a sinner saved by grace," were the closing words in the will of a servant of Christ, who was eminent in gifts and service. In a word, let us mass together the countless instances of such death-bed triumphs, and we shall find as the result these two facts:—That never at

any time have believers had a profounder appreciation of the blood of Christ, of its precious saving efficacy, than in these recorded moments of their dying experience; and that they have unanimously declared His atoning work alone to be the ground of their hope that maketh not ashamed.

VII. — THE ACTUAL BLESSEDNESS OF THE HEAVENLY STATE is the crowning testimony to the efficacy of the great atonement.

In heaven Christ Himself appears in priestly attire, a lamb as it had been slain. The glorified ones beside Him and before Him have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and their song is, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."[1]

In concluding this discourse, let us ask ourselves whether we can add our Amen to this uniform, cumulative, and multitudinous testimony. Let those who have not believed on Jesus, and have never felt the power of His peace-speaking blood, be warned of their danger. Let them look unto Him and be saved. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Ah, brethren, I fear that there are some among us who,

[1] Rev. v. 9.

often as they have heard, do not know the joyful sound, and are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. If they continue to refuse the offer of the crucified Saviour, let them remember that these opportunities will pass away in a few years at most, it may be, in a few weeks or months, and let me remind them with all the solemnity and urgency of one speaking in the name of God of these awful words, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."[1]

To you that trust in a crucified and now exalted Redeemer, let me say this word. Live close to Him, and cleave unto Him with your whole heart. Your salvation is complete, see that ye receive out of His fulness, and grace for grace. The proofs of His acceptance with the Father are many, and most consolatory. Trust entirely to that one offering, whereby He hath "perfected for ever them that are

[1] Heb. x. 26–29.

sanctified." Receive the Holy Ghost with His manifold gifts. Look upwards to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and dwell with holy delight upon His intercession before the Father. He prays for all, and He prays for each. To His holy, earnest, prompt, powerful, tender, and perpetual advocacy you owe every spiritual blessing you possess. Even the palm-bearing and white-robed immortals depend upon Him for everything,—"not a ray of light, not a smile of love, not a thrill of gladness, not a note of joy, for which they are not indebted to the angel standing with the golden censer before the throne." Your present peace is secured by His blood, and maintained by His intercession. Your growth in grace and increasing holiness are the effects of His all-sufficient purification. Your hope of heaven springs from His cross, and is guaranteed by His high-priestly prayer:—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."[1] "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."[2]

[1] John xvii. 24. [2] Rom. v. 11.

VII.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.[1]

"After this the judgment."—Heb. ix. 27.

THE execution of the sentence "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" is, so far as we see, the end of man. The appointment unto man once to die is fulfilled with inexorable rigour, and with such completeness and finality as to sever his relations with the present world, to rend the fabric of earthly hopes, and to effect a mighty change both on the body and the soul. The place that once knew him knows him no more for ever. But man is a living personality having a spirit distinct from the body, independent of all animal vicissitudes, and in its own nature indestructible. The unity of this spiritual being is assumed in Scripture, and its life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel. We derive our being from the Father of Spirits, and are united to Him; we believe, we hope, we love, we enter into fellowship with unseen

[1] Preached 26th Dec., 1875: the second of three discourses on Heb. ix. 27, 28.

beings; and our irrepressible longings after a life beyond death and the grave bear testimony to our everlasting destiny, and to the original dignity of our nature as impressed with the image of God. We throw out of account the Platonic theory of the pre-existence of souls in another state of being —a theory with which was connected Plato's doctrine of innate ideas. We also repel the theory of the descent of souls as a transmitted inheritance from earthly parents, and hold that each soul is the immediate work of the Creator, separate from all other souls, and endued with the capacity of living for ever. All that we are and have, except the evil which is in us and the evil we have wrought, comes from the one source of life; while we ourselves continue to exist with an undying personality. It is at death that "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it." But the two parts of which we are composed are to be re-united. Among the many solemn revelations of the will of God on this subject, let this one suffice, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."[1] The resurrection

[1] John v. 28, 29.

of the dead will be followed by the general judgment, in which small and great shall stand before God. In our text no mention is made of the resurrection, because the writer has before his mind only the two great and inevitable moments of death and judgment. The resurrection is preparatory to the judgment, but no intermediate event can destroy the profound and ineffaceable connection between the death of each once for all, and that final universal assize.

A long period intervenes between these two solemn events. Abel has been in the state of the dead six thousand years already; and our ignorance of the time of the end is so great that our Lord Himself said, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."[1] How long each of us must remain in the intermediate state we cannot tell. Enough for us to know that between our death and our appearing before the Great White Throne nothing of the like moment will occur. As death leaves us, so will judgment find us. There is no underworld gospel, no posthumous salvation, no possibility of repentance, and no offer of mercy to be made between the death of the body and the last judgment.

If anything can arouse the careless and alarm

[1] Mark xiii. 32.

the boldest sinner, it is the doctrine of the final judgment, in which he has as real an interest—albeit an awfully sad one—as the purest saint. And although it possesses elements of majesty and terror, which nothing external can enhance, still the arrival of the last Sabbath of another year reminds us that we are making sensible progress towards that august tribunal, and its knell gives additional emphasis and solemnity to an appeal always urgent—"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Another remark before I proceed. The benefit of this day's discourse depends chiefly upon yourselves; for this subject requires solemn thought and prayerfulness on your parts rather than fulness of description on that of the preacher; and great will be our happiness if, as the result of our meditation, God's grace shall enable us to say in our inmost hearts, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment."[1]

We shall arrange our thoughts under these heads:—The reasons we have for believing in the certainty of the judgment to come, and The disclosures which Scripture makes on the subject.

I.—OUR REASONS FOR BELIEVING THAT THERE WILL BE A JUDGMENT.

1. Consider the *witnessing power of con-*

[1] 1 John iv. 17.

science. The apostle summons it as a natural evidence of final retribution—"Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."[1] If morality has any basis in the nature of things, and if conscience is a real force in the soul of man, and if the distinction between right and wrong, between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between a living trust in God and a rebellious denial of Him, is real and abiding, there must be a future, in which each personal spirit will subsist under conditions having direct relations to its character and moral attainments in the present life. The necessity of it must be postulated in order to give depth and power to the decisions of conscience, and to render morality something better than an outward ritualism, a prudential regard to our own interests, or the accidental exercise of a capricious kindness. Whether you regard conscience as a monitor, a witness, or a judge, it bears impressive evidence to the reality of a judgment to come. As a monitor it reminds us of the inviolable claims of the Divine law; as a witness it is bound over to appear and to give testi-

[1] Rom. ii. 15, 16.

mony either for or against us at some future time; while its judicial power is felt in those stings of remorse, agonies of despair, and terrors of coming wrath which are the penalties of sin even in this life, and are the heralds of utter condemnation in the world to come. We see its evidence in the gloomy recollections of an old age unblest and unforgiven, in the desperate attempts of the criminal to bury the crushing sense of his guilt, in the bitter tears shed over the indulgence of some youthful passion, and in the deep blushes of shame on the cheek of the little child who has just told his first lie or done his first act of conscious wickedness. This witness, which every one carries in his own bosom, and which may be bribed and kept quiet for a time, but which you cannot send across the seas to be out of the way or silence for ever, testifies even now to the holiness of God and the reality of duty. "I'll not meddle with it;" says one of the murderers in Shakespear's Richard III.; "it is a dangerous thing, it makes a man a coward; a man cannot steal but it accuseth him; a man cannot swear but it checks him; a man cannot do a secret sin but it detects him; 'tis a blushing, shamefaced spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom; it fills one full of obstacles; it made me once restore a purse of gold that by chance I found; it beggars any man that

keeps it; it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well, endeavours to trust to himself and live without it."

2. Our intuitive conviction of *the righteousness of God* makes us believe in judgment to come. Perfect justice is an essential attribute of God, and utterly immoral is every conception of Him in which His absolute and immaculate righteousness is either misconceived, forgotten, or confounded. A being that is partial, indifferent to right, capable of swerving, inclined to favouritism, or moved by a false compassion, is not God, but an idol fashioned after the base thoughts of men, and unworthy of our trust and love. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is the intuition of our moral consciousness as well as the expression of adoration and absorbing self-surrender to His will; and the thought of His perfect righteousness leads us directly to the conception of a throne of retribution from which He will dispense rewards and punishments according to the character of His moral subjects. He loves righteousness, and all His judgments are according to truth. In searching the hearts of men, in bringing to light every secret work, in adjudicating on the character, and in apportioning the reward or the punishment, there will be on the part of the Judge the exercise of a

holy rectitude which will carry conviction to every conscience. Wherever reference is made to this crowning and consummate decision, the attribute of righteousness is brought prominently forward. "And he shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."[1] "And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is Judge himself."[2] "Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness."[3] And even the beatific hope of royal reward at the hand of Christ springs from the internal assurance of His unsullied equity. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."[4]

3. But the consideration of the righteousness of the Moral Governor of the universe leads us to notice that *the anomalies and discrepancies of the present life* would be a blot upon His justice if this were the end of all things. In this life, neither are the rewards correspondent to the virtues, nor the penalties to the sins, of men. So far as we can see, flagitious sinners often have an impunity that is final, while the afflictions of the righteous are often unrelieved except by the internal comforts of the Holy Ghost. How often are the noblest endea-

[1] Ps. ix. 8.
[2] Ps. l. 6.
[3] Acts xvii. 31.
[4] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

vours to do good defeated, and that generally by the hostility and selfishness of the base? Designs conceived in malignity and executed with a disgusting combination of craft and cruelty have often triumphed over innocence and purity and love. The bad are often prosperous and occupy high stations, while the good are "destitute, afflicted, tormented." If you look only at the surface, and judge only for the present, you see chaos, confusion, and contradiction, which so harassed the thoughts of the best among the heathen that they broke out into outrageous blasphemy against the order of the universe. Such also was the result of Solomon's observation when his gloom was not brightened by the thought of God's holy purposes: "So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter."[1] Asaph, too, found these anomalies too hard for him: "But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."[2]

In the view of these contradictions, eternal justice cannot close its account with any human conscience

[1] Eccles iv. 1. [2] Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3.

at the moment of death; there must be an after-world in which the unequal balance of suffering and happiness, of good and evil during life, will be surely rectified. And such a law seems plainly indicated in the solemn revelations of the unseen realms of the dead:—"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented."[1]

Our argument goes into things deeper than the indiscriminate and promiscuous allotments of outward gifts, such as wealth and greatness. Indeed, too much has been made of worldly distinctions, as if riches, high station, and a splendid name could be either proper rewards of moral excellence or special signs of Divine favour. But look at the other aspect of this subject. How many have suffered the loss of character and reputation through the ignorance, or thoughtlessness, or malice of men? How many hearts have been broken through reproach, and how many illustrious men and women have gone to their graves in shadow and cloud? Just as, on the other side, some have left the world, as they lived in it, with a lie in their right hand. Yes, there will be a resurrection of reputations as well as of bodies, a return to honour, and an exaltation to immortal renown.

[1] Luke xvi. 25.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday."[1]

Whether you consider the testimony of conscience or the perfection of the righteousness of God, or the shadows of dark and mysterious contradiction that rest on the moral order of the present life, you find an argument for holding the reality of a judgment to come. These arguments are cumulative; and while each of them has a separate and independent force, taken together they form a threefold cord not easily to be broken. They are moral in their nature and rest both upon facts of consciousness and facts of observation. But they are recognized in Holy Scripture itself as valid for the purposes of conviction; and hence Paul touched the conscience of Felix by "reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,"[2] and his speech to the Athenians contained a marvellous union of natural theology and Christian truth.[3]

4. *God has revealed the reality of the judgment under every dispensation;* and with increasing clearness and solemnity.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judg-

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6. [2] Acts xxiv. 25. [3] Acts xvii.

ment upon all."[1] Solomon thus predicts it, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."[2] In the writings of the prophets we have it revealed, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."[3] It formed a very marked feature in the teaching of Christ Himself, "Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."[4] Paul, who imbibed so fully the words of his Master, often declares it, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."[5] And the beloved apostle describes with awful sublimity the transactions of the last day, "And I saw the dead small and great stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life;

[1] Jude ver. 14. [2] Eccles. xii. 14.
[3] Dan. vii. 9, 10. [4] Matt. xxv. 32. [5] 2 Cor. v. 10.

and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works."[1]

5. These proofs are confirmed and sealed by *solemn facts in the history of the world.* The submersion of the old world by water was a manifestation of God's hatred of sin, and a harbinger of the last judgment, while it has supplied some of the most striking images of its suddenness, terror, and irretrievable doom. The flames of Sodom and Gomorrah point to the burning of Tophet and these unhappy cities "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."[2] The predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem and of His own coming are so blended in the words of Christ that it is difficult to separate the one from the other. The complete demolition of the sacred city, with all the horrors of the siege, is the attestation of the truth of God; and if one part of the prediction has been fulfilled with such precision, then we have the guarantee that the other and greater event will take place at the end of the world, the time appointed in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God the Father. But the crowning

[1] Rev. xx. 12, 13. [2] Jude ver. 7.

evidence in the realm of facts is the revival of Jesus by the glory of the Father, a fact rich in spiritual efficacy, and pregnant with the mighty energies of mediatorial dominion. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."[1]

II.—So far of the reasons for believing in the certainty of the final judgment. Let us now endeavour to apprehend THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE CONCERNING IT, so as to receive the truth into our hearts.

1. With regard to its *nature*, there seems to be a combination of what is literal with what is figurative in the representations of Scripture. It is described as a judiciary process, and our clearest conception of it is derived from the procedure in earthly courts of justice. The reality which underlies all the figurative representations is the final determination of the character of all, and the disposal of the soul and body of every one of us eternally.

The picture of a judicial proceeding is sufficiently clear and suggestive. We read (1) of a tribunal, a judgment-seat, a throne, on which the Judge will sit. (2) There is to be a personal appearance of all

[1] Acts xvii. 31.

before it, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."[1] (3) The moral actions of our whole lives are to be brought out; the thoughts, desires, and motives of the heart also. (4) A definitive sentence will be passed upon every one according to his work. To those on the left hand the Son of Man shall say, "Depart, ye cursed;" while He shall welcome those on His right with the gracious words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." (5) The sentence will be carried out in all its fulness, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."[2] Such are some of the reasons why it is compared to a judgment before the tribunals of man.

2. The *Judge* will be God in the person of the Son. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are one God, who possesses rightful authority and absolute dominion. Judgment is a divine work, and is involved in our conception of the supremacy and moral government of God. The original justiciary power rests in the one God; but it has been vested in the incarnate Saviour as a delegated and mediatorial gift. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."[3] "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man."[4]

[1] 2 Cor. v. 10.
[2] Matt. xxv. 46.
[3] John v. 22.
[4] John v. 27.

"We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."[1]

As the head of humanity, He will be its judge; for it belongs to Him—to be by Him redeemed, glorified, or condemned. The judgment is to be open, public, and visible, and it requires a judge who will be seen by the eyes of men. In answer to the adjuration of the high priest He said,—"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."[2] "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him."[3] It is man that is to be judged, and it is by man—the Son of Man—the Representative and Head of the new creation—that judgment is to be executed.

This function of judgment is necessary to the completeness of Christ's mediatory office. His "fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."[4] He is the "Man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods," and who "after a long time cometh and reckoneth with them."[5] He is the Shepherd, who "shall separate all nations

[1] Rom. xiv. 10. [3] Rev. i. 7. [5] Matt. xxv. 14, 19.
[2] Matt. xxvi. 64. [4] Matt. iii. 12.

[illegible] from the goats."[1] The [illegible] an attribute of His kingly [illegible] of His moral [illegible] sympathy of His holy [illegible] influence. By virtue [illegible] He will be able to fulfil all the [illegible] to invest His people with the [illegible] to exalt them to His own [illegible] to make them share with Himself [illegible] with the Father before the [illegible] He will visit with His just displeasure those who despised and rejected Him as [illegible] and Redeemer.

It is further, that He should judge the world [illegible] of His mediatorial reward. He once [illegible] now He is glorified. Whatever [illegible] majesty adhere to the dignity of [illegible] belong to Him who "humbled himself [illegible] obedient unto death, even the death of [illegible]—who once stood at the bar of Pilate, [illegible] to die. This reward is an [illegible] of the Father's complacency in Him. [illegible] judgment will have peerless [illegible] it will present an aspect of [illegible] splendour even to the bodily eye, [illegible] the glory of His person, and elicit [illegible] acts of power and grace, and it will

[1] Matt. xxv. 32

awaken the adoration of saints, while it will fill the impenitent with unutterable terror and despair.

Nor is this all: for He had a human experience complete in all its parts, sin only excepted, and will be able to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Perhaps it is not proper for His people to think of Him simply as their Friend in that day; for righteousness, strict, impartial, immaculate, and unbending, is the chief quality of a judge, and will be found in Him in perfection—"He shall reward every man according to his works." Yet there is something most sustaining in the thought that our Judge is one with all mankind in the possession of a common nature, while by external dignity the Son of God; that He is one with His people in the transcendent mystery of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is with us and in us; and that He is one with them in the sorrowful and afflictive experiences of earth—for even from the throne of judgment the Son of Man declares, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."[1]

3. It will be universal both as to its *subjects* and as to the *matter* of the adjudication.

(*a*) One passage of Scripture warrants us in be-

[1] Matt. xxv. 40.

lieving that the fallen angels will be judged along with mankind. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."[1] And one of them, in the anguish of hopeless terror, cried out at the sight of Jesus, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Passing by this woful theme, let us take its universality as regards mankind. We must all appear before that judgment-seat. All, without exception and without distinction, good and bad, rich and poor, small and great, high and low, the quick and the dead. There will be such a concourse as never met in one place before. The world of spirits shall send forth its multitudinous hosts, death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them; and earth shall send up the millions upon millions who, through all its lengthened ages, and over its wide extended climes, have been its inhabitants. All the populations of the ancient kingdoms of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome the enormous hordes of Africa, the citizens of the cultivated capitals of Europe, and the dwellers in the remotest parts of the earth—all that have ever lived, whatever their age, their character, their history, or their state. The noble roll of the

[1] Jude, *v.* 6.

Emperors will be there, and the long line of the Popes; but the pride of rank and the pomp of military glory will not avail the former, and the claims to infallibility urged by the latter will wither before the wrath of the Lamb. Ministers of the gospel will be there, as well as every one of their people, "for they watch for your souls as they that must give account;" but the dignity of their office will not save them, and if they are personally unrighteous, it will be utterly vain for them to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have done many wonderful works?"

Other assemblies have been mostly representative, but this is to be absolutely universal, for every one of us is to appear for himself, and in his own person. Each of us will feel as solitary and alone as if he only were before the eye of the Judge. I presume that we have felt a deeper loneliness in a dense multitude, or on the crowded streets of a great city, than when walking on some quiet country road. But there will be something more than this kind of feeling on that awful day. The consciousness of our separate personality, the sense of responsibility, the emotions of humble trust or the terrors of blank despair, the knowledge that the searching eye of the Judge is upon us—these things will make us forget the countless numbers around us, while the

quickened to a preternatural acuteness
make us either thrill with a holy joy, or quake
memonitory throes of the second death.
their dear brethren, bring home to our-
realize our own appearing before
of Christ.
the matter of this judgment, it
in the case of the impeni-
their thoughts, words, and
and final sentence:
work into judgment,
whether it be good or
question full of interest,
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be made open
that we shall receive
will be our last
through so dread a
the blood of our
Lord's love. Still it
intimations pointing to

See Matt. xxv. 34-36.

another conclusion. There is the completeness of divine pardon. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."[1] "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."[2] When "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, they shall not be found."[3] "He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea"[4] We are encouraged to abide in Christ, "that when he shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Such questions, however, we can leave in the hands of Him who hath said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."[5] From the sentence of the Judge that day there will be no appeal. Appeal would be impossible, for there is no higher tribunal to which the appeal could be made. It would be undesirable, for the judgment will be according to righteousness. And the judgment will be felt by all to be final and irreversible. "He that is unjust let him be

[1] Isaiah xliii. 25.
[2] Ps. ciii. 12.
[3] Jer. l. 20.
[4] Micah vii. 19.
[5] Isaiah liv. 17.

unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still." [1]

[1] Rev. xxii. 11.

VIII.

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

"Out of weakness were made strong."—Heb. xi. 34.

AFTER he has given noble examples of the elders who had obtained a good report through faith, the writer feels the subject growing to his hands; other names, illustrious for the triumphs of their faith, occur to his memory, and other forms pass before his imagination, reverend with the halo of immortal renown. But he interrupts himself, passes swiftly over these names, and gathers up their victories in a few sentences of condensed energy and sublime eloquence. Among the achievements thus celebrated, place is given to THE STRENGTH THAT CAME OUT OF WEAKNESS. What this precisely means, the whole strain of the passage may help us to determine.

I. The triumphs of faith recorded in this chapter are marked throughout by a combination of miraculous effects in the sphere of nature, with spiritual action in that of grace. The par-

ticular instance of that combination alluded to in our text is most likely that of *deliverances from bodily infirmity, wrought in response to the faith of God's servants.* The word, "weakness,"[1] is one frequently applied to bodily distemper, *e.g.*, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity."[2] Taken in this sense the text asserts the fact that, through faith, marvellous deliverances from disease, from sickness, and from pain have been wrought repeatedly in the experience of God's people. The analogy of the context leads us further to surmise that some particular and personal examples of this kind were present to the mind of the writer. The other achievements here recorded we naturally connect with the persons by whom they were accomplished. It was the faith of Daniel which was instrumental in "shutting the mouths of lions." His companions in Babylon, by faith, "quenched the violence of fire." In the phrase, "escaped the edge of the sword," there is probably an allusion to David when pursued by Saul, to Elijah and Elisha when persecuted by the rulers of Israel or beset by the armies of Syria, to Jeremiah, Baruch, Ebedmelech, and Gedaliah, amid the desolating cruelties of the Chaldæan invasion. So our text may have reference to the miraculous recovery of Hezekiah, one of the three most perfect

[1] ἀσθενεία. [2] Luke xiii. 12.

kings of Judah.[1] Hezekiah's reign had been distinguished by a revival of the true spirit of the theocracy, and by great and salutary reforms, in which he was supported by the noble efforts of Isaiah. About the time of Sennacherib's futile invasion in the fourteenth year of his reign, Hezekiah was seized with a dangerous illness. His kingdom was in a critical state. He had at that time no heir (for Manasseh was not born till long afterwards[2]). The command of Jehovah was direct and unconditional. "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." His own views of the future world were dark and unattractive. "For the grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."[3] In these circumstances the king turned his face toward the wall, wept sore, and prayed unto the Lord. It was the prayer of faith, in answer to which the Lord sent Isaiah with the gracious message, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." And a sign was granted in the retrogression of the shadow, on the sun-dial of Ahaz his father, ten degrees—a striking phenomenon, the nature and method of which we do not understand, beyond the fact that it was the faith

[1] 2 Kings, xviii. 5. [2] 2 Kings, xxi. 1. [3] Is. xxxviii. 18.

of Hezekiah which was the nexus between the omnipotence of God and the result described by the prophet. It was his trust in the power and compassion of God that brought the return of bodily vigour and animation after his severe and critical disorder; and his hymn of thanksgiving is the proof that his affliction was sanctified, and that there came to him an increase of spiritual health and joyfulness as well as physical restoration.

Another instance of "strength out of weakness" concludes the career of Samson, so rich in all the elements of dramatic interest, and presenting in other respects so many abrupt transitions and startling contrasts, such enigmas of character and destiny. Toward the end of his career he had become weak indeed—weak through his own incredible folly and base compliances. He lay down in sin and rose up in loss, in shame, and in weakness. In parting with his locks, which were the sign of inward consecration to God even more than of manly beauty, he lost the secret of his power. Blind and dishonoured, the object of insolent mockery and vile contempt, he who had been once the terror of the Philistines is now their sport. But the Spirit of the Lord returns to him, and in his humiliation he realises his sin, and confesses it to God as only true penitents do. He prays in his weakness, and recovering his faith

before his end, he casts himself on the mighty hand of God—"O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." "Let me die with the Philistines." Collecting all the forces of body, soul, and spirit, trusting implicitly the God of heaven, and ready to mingle his bones with those of his enemies, "he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: so the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." [1]

"Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson; and heroically hath finished
A life heroic; on his enemies
Fully revenged, hath left them years of mourning,
And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor
Through all Philistian bounds; to Israel
Honour hath left and freedom; let but them
Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
To himself and father's house eternal fame;
And which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted from him, as was feared,
But favouring and assisting to the end."

MILTON, *Samson Agonistes.*

The place of faith in the cures wrought by the incarnate Saviour is prominent and influential. It was the one mediating condition between the omnipotent energy of the Christ and the recovery of

[1] Judges xvi. 28, 30.

the sick. It was that which brought them into contact with His life-giving power, which established a bond of holy sympathy between them and Him, which regulated the measure of the healing, and alone explained some of the circumstances in these gracious and miraculous events. It was sometimes the token by which the occasion of a miracle was indicated; in every case it was the moral disposition required on the part of the patient. Faith it was which met the divine operation, was the only co-factor in producing the miraculous result, and received the blessing. It was not in every instance the faith of the sufferer himself, but sometimes that of others, which directed to Jesus by solicitude, natural affection, and intercession, threw a bridge between the Redeemer and the patient. It was so in the experience of the Centurion, whose bright insight into the power of Christ, and intense humility, awakened the admiration of the Lord, and made Him exclaim, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And the channel through which the restoring touch reached the tormented child in Syro-Phœnicia was the believing heart of the mother, who also evoked from Him the gladdening response, "Oh woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Thus the law abides—that, through faith, out of weakness they were made strong.

Although God has ceased to work these miracles of healing, the spiritual truth abides, that He often restores in answer to prayer, and that it is this fact which alone makes our prayer for recovery a real and acceptable service. In our ignorance of the hidden operations of His hand, and in the merciful interaction of natural and moral law, we cannot determine every case by an infallible test; but the duty is incumbent upon His own people in the time of their weariness and pain to exercise faith in God for recovery, to pray for it, to ask His blessing upon the means which He in His kindness has provided, and to regard the whole process of restoration as the unfolding of His good and gracious thoughts toward us.

II. Faith creates *a strength of spirit in the midst of bodily weakness, and in spite of it*, which is specially attractive.

We admire the movements of a powerful intellect all the more when we see them triumph over the impediments of a weak and disordered frame. When a man, devoted to intellectual pursuits, concentrates his energies upon the objects of knowledge, and pursues them with a resolute indifference to pain or the insidious attacks of disease, we recognise in him the dominion of spirit over the limitations and disablements of the flesh.

But we recognise something more. What we admire in such a case is not mere mental vigour, but a rare and sustaining moral courage.

There have been orators whose physical frames gave small promise of the resources of their minds, but whose intensity of emotion, and force and fire of soul have held men spell-bound, or swept them along as on buoyant and rejoicing waves. And when, as in a case like that, for example, of the sainted Robert Hall, there is the intrepid mastery both of intellect and spirit over pain—devotion to mental labour amid the most cruel distraction, an unsparing energy in the fulfilment of high duties with a noble magnanimity and a sweet resignation to the will of God, we advance a step farther, and justly ascribe such strength of character to the sustaining grace of faith. Truly out of weakness the saints are made strong. Many a woman of delicate frame and sensitive organization, with nerves finely strung, has borne hardship, disappointment, toil, loneliness, and sorrow, without complaint, and with such courage and calm trust in God, as to prove that there are in these days the same communications of strength to the soul as in the heroic ages celebrated in this chapter.

But the most impressive example of strength in weakness is the Apostle Paul. In the Corinthians we have a vivid

description of his labours in their extent and variety, of the wearing anxieties of his ministry, of the fearful demands made upon his mental and spiritual energies, while he expresses a humiliating sense of his infirmities in the flesh. We see him in his first appearance at Corinth, "in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." We see him pressed out of measure, having no rest in his body; like a soldier in the heat of battle, driven into a corner, pursued, trampled down; having the sentence of death within himself; his outward man perishing; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. He complains of his infirmity, prays the Lord thrice to take away the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him. But, in spite of these accumulated weaknesses, he is erect, unflagging, unwearied, and triumphant; his noble spirit sustaining the fragile vessel—his courage, his energy, his endurance, his ardour, not lessened but enhanced, the inward man renewed day by day, his strength made perfect in weakness, and able to say from his very heart, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

III. Faith brings strength out of weakness *for the noblest ends of the spiritual life;* and it is in the relation in which the soul stands to God, its inner experiences and its work for the Lord, that we

must seek the abiding and abundant fruits of this principle. In unfolding this truth let us note these things.

1. In all the instances recorded in this chapter there was, as a matter of fact, a beginning in weakness. There is something very august and very impressive in contemplating the grandeur of those men whom the Holy Spirit has embalmed in everlasting remembrance. Their clear outlook—their conscious walk with God—their vivid sense of things divine and eternal—their capacity for receiving revelations from heaven —their transcendant acts of trust in God, and of obedience to His will—their deeds of valour and their exercise of a patience still more kingly and heroic—all these attributes lift them so far above ourselves, that it seems hopeless to imitate them, and we are apt simply to stand gazing in idle and silent wonder. But when we are told that it was "out of weakness they were made strong," we are mightily encouraged and stimulated. Our feelings are no longer those of mere wonder and distant awe: we come to see that there is a bond of sympathy between us and them, and that our weakness—painful and humiliating as it is—need not issue in moral paralysis or eternal despair. Lest our courage should fail, or our endurance faint, God has set [illegible] great cloud of witnesses," who

were once weak as we are, beset with temptation, burdened with infirmities, liable to sink, and painfully sensible of inability and unworthiness, but who out of the depths were raised to the lofty towers of a Divine stronghold.

"Out of weakness"—we may take it literally. Samuel was chosen in the weakness of childhood, and out of it he attained to that calm power which sustained the weight of the heaviest responsibility. Moses had an almost bitter sense of his unfitness for the solemn task to which he was called, and yet he was clothed with such strength, that he carried with equal and unabated vigour the destinies of an entire nation, and was faithful to God in all his house. Even Abraham began in weakness, and had his moments of languor, partiality, and guilty terror. How surely did they all begin in weakness! How unexpectedly was the presence of Divine strength within them ofttimes revealed!

2. In the consciousness of our weakness we are to increase in the power of God. What passes for strength in the world is weakness in relation to the things of God. Force of character often leads to a proud self-sufficiency which is utterly opposed to the humility of Christ. The passions are vehement, restless, and turbulent enough; but they exclude the gentle operations of the Holy Spirit, and too often lead to criminal excesses, whose reaction ends

in exhaustion and weariness. I do not know a man weaker than he whose youth has been spent in the indulgence of his lusts, and who in old age is worn out and dead to everything gracious and pure. An iron determination of will is very serviceable in the prosecution of ambitious designs; but, however masterful, it must be broken before Christ can be formed in the soul the hope of glory.

Self-dependence is the bane of the soul; and if we would acquire an inward energy we must distrust ourselves, and confess our infirmity before God. All through the growth of the soul in grace this is the law—"When I am weak then am I strong," the less I lean upon myself, the more fully shall I trust the arm of God; for the strength that is in us is God's own, whether bestowed in the new creation in Christ Jesus or in the continual supplies which His Spirit brings. The vigour of habitual peace is weakened, and its very existence imperilled by everything approaching to self-dependence; whereas, to obtain communications from the Head by the Spirit, there must be a sense of weakness, leading us out of ourselves to Him through whom we can do all things. Paul prays for the Ephesians, that "they might be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." But such strengthening comes o[illegible] weakness, and is a real and ennobling [illegible] Consider for what we need

strength, and you will see it must be realised in our own weakness.

(1.) The inner experience of the soul in its fellowship with God demands power from Himself. We are not able to pray, to sustain communion with Him, to be in divine things by choice, by affection, and by appropriate exercises. We must have power from on high, that we may live before Him, delight ourselves in Him, and be made partakers of His blessedness. No spiritual duties whatever can be done in our own strength; and one cause of fruitlessness, and want of reality, warmth, and joy in our communion with God is our attempting it so often without a conscious reception of the power of the Holy Ghost.

(2.) The doing of His will implies power greater than our own. And how often do we attempt some particular work, excellent in itself, closely connected with His glory, and fitted to promote the welfare of man, without any true dependence upon Him for help. On the other hand, when we distrust ourselves and go in His strength, how great is the facility with which we accomplish things apparently hopeless, how happy are we in the discharge of them, and what measure of success do we often reach! "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

(3.) Resistance to temptation will not be effectual

if we rely upon our own skill and prowess, upon natural force, upon resolution, and upon our self-contained resources; but let us arm ourselves with the strength of Christ, and there is no temptation, however alluring or violent, that we shall not successfully resist and overcome.

(4.) Nothing shows more clearly the reality and all-sufficiency of this strength than its influence in enduring trial, and in making tribulation a means of purity and spiritual comfort. Verily we feel weak in trial, if we have any deep and real feelings at all. And nothing can support but the hand of God. "It is my constant grief," says one who out of weakness was made strong, "to find that all the strength and comfort I have is attributed to my mental powers of exertion, whilst I am so sensible that were I for one day to have my cruse of oil unrenewed, my strength of mind would, with the present pressure on it, give way at once. Were it not for the all-sustaining arm of my Redeemer and God I would be weaker than the weakest." Many of God's servants have burdens that but for an almighty arm would crush them. Greek mythology represented the starry vault as solid and of tremendous weight, and assigned to Atlas the mighty task of upholding it; but there are real burdens laid upon our shoulders more crushing far than the fabled incubus of the heavens.

The pressure of daily cares—the weight of our besetting sins—some disabling recollection of the past—forebodings of the future—the necessity of carrying the infirmities of others—spiritual solicitude for their salvation—the consciousness of our own personal responsibility to God—the anticipation of judgment to come, to say nothing of our guilt and shame on account of sin—Oh! well is it for us that we have heard the cheering command: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."[1]

[1] Ps. lv. 22.

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ence and spirituality of God. The Scriptures however, in condescension to our weakness, and to give us a more vivid sense of reality, express the fact of His hearing by ascribing to Him an ear, of His seeing by speaking of His eye. They evidently speak metaphorically, because in our case these mental acts are done through the medium of bodily organs. "He that planted the ear, shall not he hear? He that formed the eye, shall not he see?" (Ps. xciv. 9). It is in this way that we are to understand the language of our text. It is anthropomorphic, *i.e.*, drawn from the analogy of human organism and adapted to express the truth in a way in which men can understand it.

The eye of man is an organ of great beauty and delicacy. By it he holds communion with the outer world, gains the most lively impressions, receives his ideas of figure, of magnitude, of distance, of sublimity and of space; and through it he manifests the interior working and experiences of his soul. In our text it is said, "I will guide thee with mine eye." Let us consider some of the truths taught us by this beautiful and encouraging promise. It occurs in a Psalm which is the record of deep penitence, and of gracious overflowing pardon. I would not like to affirm too strongly that it is God Himself who speaks in these words; but there are advantages to be gained by regarding

there as the voice of the heavenly oracle, of God Himself.

I. LET US NOW STATE SOME OF THE TRUTHS TAUGHT BY THIS EXPRESSION.

1. It implies the *universality of the divine presence.* He who guides us with His eye must have the power of seeing us. He fills all space, but this cannot be through the multiplication of His essence, since He is ever one and indivisible, nor through its expansion and diffusion like ether, because He is a pure spirit. Therefore the entire indivisible Godhead must in the totality of His being be present every moment at every point of space and equally to all creatures at all times. In Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living" we have some very valuable thoughts on the several manners of the Divine presence.[1] He is present by His *essence*, which, because it is infinite, cannot be confined to any one place; by His *power*, in upholding the hosts of Heaven, and the earth, with all the things that are therein; by His *glory*, which He manifests with more effulgent majesty in some regions of the universe than in others; by His *benediction* in the solemn assemblies of His saints according to the promise of the Lord—"Wheresoever two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in

[1] London Booksellers' Edition of Jeremy Taylor's Works, III., p. 23, &c.

the midst of them;" by His *judgment* in the consciences of all men; by His *gracious indwelling* in the souls of His people—"I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Let us, brethren, seek deeper impressions of the universal presence of the High and Lofty One. Meditate upon it. Make Him the object of conscious adoration so that your hearts will actually fasten upon Him as upon one near to you. Let everything you see represent to you His excellency and power. Converse with Him in frequent prayer. Walk before Him and be perfect.

2. *It teaches us the doctrine of a special and particular providence.* Deists and Materialists regard the Creator as sustaining no other relation to His works than that of the first of a series of causes and effects. He is supposed to touch the universe only at its commencement, and then to leave it entirely to the operation of natural laws. Pantheists, again, represent the phenomena of the universe as only the various modes of one absolute substance. This substance they say is one, the modes are various; the substance abides, the modes succeed each other in rapid and perpetual motion; this substance is God, the modes are His creatures, and have not a real but only a phenomenal and seeming existence. Warm and imaginative minds

are fascinated with this view—a view which pervades so many of the finest products of literary art, and suffuses with a seductive glow some of the richest poetry of the world. Nor is this all; some in order to gain what they consider a deeper insight into moral government, as well as into creative agency, have held that the creatures exist only as they are each moment the product of Divine power, a theory which leads to the most revolting conclusions, as it denies the absolute holiness of God, the reality of moral distinctions, and the personality, freedom, and responsibilty of the human soul.

We possess the properties which God the Creator has bestowed upon us. These properties have a real efficiency as secondary causes in producing the effects proper to them. The ground of our continued existence is in God, and not in ourselves: for "In him we live and move and have our being." The precise nature of the exercise of Divine energy in upholding all things is not clearly revealed, and of course is undiscoverable; but that He does uphold, direct, govern, and dispose all creatures is evident. For (1) Continued dependence is inseparable from the idea of a creature. (2) Our consciousness tells us that we have our being, power, and blessedness in God only. (3) Scripture is full of the most delightful representations of this truth—"He upholdeth all

things by the word of his power."[1] "In him we live and have our being."[2] "O bless our God, ye people, . . . which holdeth our soul in life and suffereth not our feet to be moved."[3] "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will."[4] (4) The witness of the Spirit in the soul of the believer furnishes a strong testimony to the providence of God.

But this providence is *special* and *particular*, and our text is built upon this assumption. He knows all, and He knows each. He governs all, and He governs each. He guides all, and He guides each. It is this which makes the truth so precious, so personal, so endearing, and it is the high function of faith to give a living reality and warmth to the doctrine, and to bind it upon the soul with its solemn and tender appeals to our individual trust, and hope, and love. Even reason might show us that a universal providence implies a special. The whole is made up of parts. Great issues often spring from trivial causes. Obscure persons have often as influential a place in the events of history as those who are born in the highest rank of society, or who are endowed with the most brilliant accomplishments, or who have at their disposal vast

[1] Heb. i. 2.
[2] Acts xvii. 28.
[3] Ps. lxvi. 8-9.
[4] Prov. xxi. 1.

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divine nature and escape the "corruption that is in the world through lust." These are as clear, as certain, and as unchanging in their substance as is necessary for our personal salvation, and for our spiritual culture and development. The principle, however, of guidance by the eye, is fully recognised in Scripture. Some truths are intimated rather than affirmed, left to be detected by the keen eye of the loving disciple, though not obtruded on every cursory reader. Express and positive command cannot be pleaded for everything, although some are so much the slaves of the letter, that if they have not clear and absolute authority, they will make their own interpretation take the place of a divine rule. How many things affecting the government of the Church, the nature and subjects of baptism, the order and instrumentality of worship, the relation of church and state, the place of the divine word in public instruction, and the more trying dispensations of providence, must be discovered by the "guidance of the eye," rather than by plain, literal, and authoritative statements. And here I am reminded of the unreasonableness of those who demand rigid demonstration for everything. Moral and spiritual questions do not admit of mathematical certainty, and hence the danger of indulging an arbitrary and opinionative self-will, a dogmatical temper and a reckless impatience equally opposed

to the childlike docility of a disciple, and to the sober deductions of scientific method.

Nor is it in the region of speculative opinion alone that God guides us with His eye. In practical and experimental godliness there is much of this teaching. We have often only general principles, when we want particular applications. We have only dim and indirect intimations, when we demand categorical answers. We find only one or two leading thoughts, when we desiderate something so clear and precise as to render doubt or hesitation impossible. Take the question of our daily callings. How important for every one of us to choose and follow that occupation in life, for which our natural ability, our sympathies, our tendencies, and our education have fitted us; yet how difficult often both to the parent and the child to fix with confidence upon the one in which the latter will best advance the glory of God, be of most service to his friends and his fellowmen, and gain for himself the largest measure of personal comfort and dignity. He will not find any explicit voice in Scripture telling him whether he ought to become a professional man, a merchant, a farmer, or a mechanic; but if he is guided with the eye of God he will obtain such direction and help as shall warrant advance with a cheerful courage, and bring his will into delightful harmony with the will of God. Churches

too are often compelled to look into the eye of Christ for guidance in difficulty, and to yield themselves with an implicit trust to the presence and leading of His Holy Spirit. And the lowly follower of Christ has often to look above the gloom of his own perplexities, above the thick clouds of temptation, above even the disturbing influences of present experience, in order to catch the assuring glance of his Father's face, and to feel that if the hand of Almighty Assistance is withheld, and if the voice of the Heavenly Witness is silent, the eye is still upon him, leading him by a way that he knows not, that he may go to a city of habitation.

II.—LET US NOW CONSIDER WHAT IS OUR DUTY UNDER THIS HEAVENLY GUIDANCE.

1. *We must be attentive to it.* Our eye must meet His. What is here said is not simply that His eye will be upon us; for that were only a declaration however solemn and impressive of His august majesty, and of the terrible power of His omniscience, and of the universal government of Him who slumbers not, neither sleeps. It is a promise that we shall be "guided" by His eye. Now it is not enough for the purposes of guidance that the eye be fixed upon us. Our own eye must be fixed upon His; for it is only when the two eyes meet, that we can find out the way in which we

ought to walk. With what intensity and eagerness ought we to be looking to Him as we tread the dangerous paths of life, lest we miss the right way and fall into sin! True, He is able to lead even the blind by a way they know not; but He desires us to look to Him with an eager, intent, and steadfast gaze; and would that all of us, dear brethren, could take up the simple but ardent language, "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us."[1] Earnest attention then is required in order to watch and discover the indications of His will. If we are sincerely desirous of knowing in what direction the loving eye of our Heavenly Father points, it will not be an occasional vague and careless look that will suffice, but with an eye full of solicitude, of earnestness, of tender desire, and of expectation we shall wait upon Him all the day. The anxiety of earnest inquiry in the first stages of our experience is never free from pain; for it springs from the sense of guilt, and from the apprehension of God's holy and righteous wrath; and till we have actually believed in Christ and obtained forgiveness for His name's sake, we can

[1] Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2.

have no calm and settled peace. The cause for painful solicitude then ceases, but we shall continue to cherish a desire for the glory of God, and for discovering the best way of attaining this end, that will keep our hearts in active and even anxious concern, and that will awaken in us a spirit of constant reliance upon the leading of His Holy Spirit. The want of this earnest solicitude, or its diminution, is the true cause of stumbling, and backsliding, and the reason why so many walk feebly in the ways of God. Remember how weak you are in yourself, how liable to err, how apt to mistake the true path; remember how many are the seductions of the world, and how Satan tempts us to indulge a gay and easy carriage, and you will feel how great is the necessity for this spiritual solicitude to catch the eye of God, and how great too is the blessedness of being led and guided by His clear knowledge and unerring wisdom.

2. *Quick and affectionate interpretation of the eye of God is a duty arising from the promise of the text.*

There is a great deal said in Scripture as to the language of the eye; and if you think for a moment on the look which Christ cast upon Peter when he had uttered his third and most vehement denial—a look which pierced his very soul, and sent him in agony and shame to weep the bitter tears of godly sorrow—you will admit that a look may be as pene-

[illegible] But [illegible] this, that it [illegible] the meaning of a look, and [illegible] to set [illegible] the [illegible] and [illegible] on the part of [illegible] on our part. If [illegible] we must be on the out- [illegible] and [illegible] the countenance of the [illegible] which God's children [illegible] and explains to them the [illegible] the glances of His eye. [illegible] in terms of friendship with Him. [illegible] have no [illegible] the intimations of God's will. [illegible] the changes of His coun- [illegible] affected by the things that are [illegible] Nor is this enough; for our [illegible] must be close, intimate, and [illegible] and thus we shall acquire a divine [illegible] the capacity for recognising [illegible] without express and formal command, that delicate and refined perception of the meaning of God's face, which will keep us in holy ways and gradually transform us into His image. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of

thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day." [1]

It was thus that Jesus walked; His eye was fixed upon God; His Father guided Him with His eye. And to a quick and affectionate heart this is enough. The dutiful child will not wait till his father issue an actual prohibition or impose an absolute command; he will take direction from a turn of the countenance, from a gesture, from a movement, and where he can do little more than guess what will please his father most, he will act on his filial instincts, rather than excuse himself by the want of more distinct information. In the absence of clear and plain directions, he will search out the briefest hints, and gather precious lessons even from his father's silence. He may receive from his father a communication containing very precise instructions on some points, which he will implicitly obey; but, with regard to others in which he is interested there may be nothing decisive. How will he act? He will read the letter again and again, weighing every expression, trying to find out its shade of meaning, dwelling upon every slight allusion and upon every incidental notice in the hope of finding what line of conduct is likely to give the greatest pleasure to his parent. This I call affectionate interpretation of

[1] Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16.

[illegible] in a literal sense. So it is [illegible] God. They are quick in [illegible] They interpret the mean- [illegible] penetrate even the thick [illegible] see His smile and His [illegible] more in Scripture than [illegible] understanding of Provi- [illegible] blind world regards [illegible] And let me remind [illegible] teachings are indicated [illegible] contrasted with the [illegible] the bit and bridle. [illegible] warm sunbeam, that [illegible] peace over our [illegible] wild ass's colt and [illegible] God's gentle- [illegible] His good- [illegible] His love, He [illegible]

X.

CHRISTIAN COURAGE.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue."—2 Peter i. 5.

THE object of any particular epistle is generally stated at the outset, but it is towards the close of this Second Epistle of Peter that we get a clear idea of the immediate end of the Apostle in writing it. This was two-fold: to guard his readers against being seduced from their steadfast adherence to the gospel, and to encourage them to growth "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"—the latter being clearly the more prominent in the mind of the writer. Frequently throughout the Epistle we have this knowledge presented to us, both in its doctrinal significance, and in its practical bearings. It is the instrument of the divine agency in us, the means of our escape from the pollutions of the world, the condition of our fellowship with God, and of our entrance into the Kingdom of Christ, whose power and majesty

are revealed to the faith of the church. We should note as characteristic the marked references to forms of evil working in the society of the time, by which even those here addressed were in danger of being corrupted and undermined. Nor should we omit to observe that there are points of concurrence and similarity between this epistle and that of Jude. The references to the sinning angels, to Sodom and Gomorrah, to the character of Balaam, and the general tone in regard to the swift judgments of God upon evil-doers, are coincidences too emphatic to be without their significance.

Spiritual growth, however, is, as we have said, the leading thought of the Epistle; and the whole paragraph of which our text forms a part, is a fervent exhortation to the duty, and an impressive illustration of some of the elements of that growth. I purpose, with the blessing of God the Holy Ghost, and relying on your intelligent interest and sympathy to present to you these elements in their order on the mornings of successive Sabbaths.[1] There are two benefits we ought to derive from such a survey. We shall see how practical and genuine is the work of grace in the soul, and how necessary it is to cultivate particular excellencies of charac[illegible]ttend to the details of our

[illegible] preached from the passage.

spiritual life. With many who have a real faith in God, there is too much indolence and passivity in religion, a disproportionate desire for comfort, and a tendency to rest in mere moods and frames. May not our too frequent failures in the divine life be ascribed to the fact that our habits are too stiff, our motives too selfish, our aims too sordid, too many, and too diverse?

Our text has a ringing sound, and ought to stir us like the call of a trumpet. "Beside this, add to your faith virtue." It is addressed to those who have been effectually called, who have faith, who are partakers of the holiness, truth, and love of God himself, and who have escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. On this very account, because of their state, privilege, and prerogatives in Christ, they were to advance on the line here indicated. They had faith; well, let them use all diligence to add to it virtue. The word here rendered virtue [ἀρετή] denotes not moral goodness in general, but specifically energy, force, courage, heroism. With us 'virtue' is the generic term for moral excellence of every kind; but with the ancients it had a more definite and precise meaning indicating that manly and strenuous vigour of character which shows itself in effective determinations of the will, in resolute and energetic action, in victorious endurance, and in deeds of heroism.

2. THERE IS A DANGER OF PIETY DEGENERATING INTO SLOTH. It may sink into the desire of selfish comfort, and the experience of mental moods of depression and exaltation; but Peter reminds his readers that they must have vigour and healthy enthusiasm, the disposition and the gift of strenuous achievement, and the kingly grace of an undaunted and persevering courage.

It has even been objected to the morality of Christianity that it makes too much of the passive virtues—of poverty, of sorrow, of meekness, of resignation, of patience, and that it under-values the productive and aggressive energies of our nature. But this objection proceeds from a total misunderstanding. These graces which are called passive are not really so; the soul in waiting, in receiving, and in enduring is putting forth its deepest energies, and is taking a firm grasp of things unseen and eternal, which could not have a transforming efficacy without being vitally received. And again, Scripture itself enjoins a manly activity in the discharge of duty, and a resolute prosecution of high and unselfish ends. Christ Himself has described His kingdom in these terms: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by [illegible] in itself a thing so spiritual, [illegible] to be laid hold upon with

promptitude and energy. Let us not say to ourselves

> "We do it wrong, being so majestical,
> To offer it the show of violence;"

the kingdom uses force, and it suffers force, despite its inherent calmness and spirituality. The men of force lay hold upon it, relying with all their soul upon the new thought, the new truth, the new faith; they surrender themselves to its guidance, regardless of the consequences to themselves—to their own ease, their own comfort, or their own advancement in the world.

II. THE VIRTUE OF OUR TEXT IS A SPIRITUAL GRACE. Courage, in the ordinary sense, depends often upon physical structure, upon outward training, upon the habits of others. And even moral courage is often the result of a high-strung temperament and of a native disposition for adventure, for enterprise and daring. But the spiritual virtue here spoken of is something added to faith, springing out of it, increased by it, and directed by faith to its noblest conquests. It begins in a frank and ingenuous trustfulness in God, which is the root of spiritual boldness. The causes of fear are inward. Outward circumstances may enhance but cannot create mental terror. A sinless being has no fear; and no accumulation of the images of danger will

strike with fear one whose conscience is clear, and whose hands are pure. On the other hand it is conscience which makes cowards of us all. The rustling of the leaves at midnight will cause the murderer to quake. The liar will grow pale and stammer before the question of a little child. The life of the criminal has been poisoned at its very fountain; his nature has been degraded; his energies wasted; his hopes blighted. He knows that the laws of the moral universe are against him and that escape is impossible. The memory of sin haunts him like a spectre, and casts its ghastly shadow over the fairest scenes of nature. Even amid the blaze of noon his soul is darkened by the avenging demons. And although there be none of us in this wretched condition in its worst forms, yet we must have a fearless trust in God, before we can have any heartiness and vigour and joy in doing His work.

There is a slavish dread of God which is equally opposed to reason and Scripture, to the genius of the Christian religion and to the experience of penitent believers. Those who are possessed by it regard their Creator as implacable, as exerting His power only to crush, as pursuing His defenceless creatures with the thunderbolts of His irate vengeance; their hearts sink within them, and they become abject and terror-stricken. But let Him be seen

in His true character—the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—let Him be embraced in the fulness of His grace—let Him come into our hearts as all their salvation and all their desire,—then there will arise within us the spirit of sonship, of a glad, ingenuous, and fearless trust, and we shall be able to pass outside of the condemning sentence of the law, to break all the bonds of our guilty terrors, to look the world calmly and boldly in the face, and in anticipating the future to take up the experience of the beloved apostle:—"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment."

III. But fearlessness is only one element of this grace. It includes MANLY ENERGY AND FORCE OF CHARACTER—what Paul in writing to Timothy designates "the spirit of power."

In this force there is a magnanimity and moral greatness which raises us above everything mean, cowardly, selfish, and crooked. At the same time it gives a momentum which carries us forward in the line of great duties, and does not rest till they be thoroughly done. We have an excellent instance of this frame of mind in the history of Peter himself, even although it was mingled with vicious elements and issued in a dangerous collapse.

This gracious force will show itself in every duty

and in every sphere of spiritual activity. It will make the believer bold in maintaining whatever he believes to be true in matters of faith, right in principle, scriptural in the positive institutions of the Church, and pure in his own walk and conversation in the world. He will not be the creature of circumstances, or of fashion, elated by the breath of applause, and cast down when that breath has spent itself. He does not build on the quicksands, but on the solid rock; his feelings are not languid or tempestuous with the occasion, but are governed by principle, and animated, pervaded, and ennobled by the spirit of God. In all things he is clear in sight, pure in motive, and vigorous in action. While others are dreaming he is working; and whatsoever he does he does it with his might. He anticipates difficulties, confronts danger, and organises fresh and permanent victories out of temporary defeats. Such spiritual courage implies strong convictions and resolute purpose; but again we say it springs from faith, whose influence is felt in revealing the ideal of all true work, in bringing us into fellowship with the strength of God, in keeping our own hearts pure, and in supplying us with the stimulus of an elastic and unconquerable hope. What tremendous force lies latent in simple and abiding trust in God. And this we must exercise if we would show anything of vigorous

and sustained energy in doing our work. A simple faith will save us from perplexities and darkness, which always weaken; a strong faith will prevail over temptation, weariness, and opposition; a clear faith will bring eternity near, and the precious Saviour, and the everlasting crown of glory, lifting us up from the deepest caverns to the highest peaks; and an appropriating faith will receive the promise in its fulness, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

XI.

THE BRUISED REED AND THE SMOKING FLAX.[1]

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."—Isaiah xlii. 3.

THOSE of you who read Scripture thoughtfully and with care must have noticed the significance attached in the latter portion of Isaiah to the personage designated the "Lord's Servant," and some very valuable contributions to the proper understanding of the expression have been made by recent biblical scholarship. Even a cursory observation of the passages in which He is named is enough to convince us that He is a distinct personality, and not the embodied idea of Israel; while the terms of dignity, of excellence, and of power in which He is presented are quite inapplicable to the prophet, or to any human messenger, however illustrious and potent. Yet "the Servant of

[1] Glasgow, 27th January, 1878. A few sentences at the close are from a Sermon of 1874 on Luke xxiv. 29.

Jehovah" had a most intimate relation to Israel. He sprang out of it as a branch from a root, as the apex from the base of a pyramid. He fulfilled the idea of its divine calling, gathered up into His character the noblest features of its history, surpassed in His own life the grandeur of its best representatives,—the faith of Abraham, the affection of Jacob, the purity of Joseph, the meekness of Moses, the piety of David, and the wisdom of Solomon. He realised in His person the glowing hopes which the promises of God had awakened, and accomplished in the execution of His offices the spiritual ends which type and symbol, sacrifice and ritual had failed to effect. His service was so pure, so entire, so constant, so faithful, and so abundant, that it satisfied the heart of God, who brings Him before us in language of admiration and approval. "Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."

Now, of all the names that fill the record of Israel there is only One who answers the description, and He is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David, the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven. What we might conclude inferentially from the transcendent excellencies of this ideal, the Servant of Jehovah, as He is depicted in prophecy, is confirmed by the infallible word of God in the gospel history. In an epilogue peculiar

In Matthew we have an account of a visit paid by Jesus to one of the synagogues of Galilee. His enemies waited for Him. There was present a man with a withered hand. In answer to their ensnaring question, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? He replied, "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days," and looking at His adversaries with holy indignation and sorrow, He saith to the man, "Stretch forth thine hand." A wicked conspiracy between the Pharisees and the Herodians being formed to destroy Him, He sought peace and safety in retirement. Multitudes, however, followed Him, and He healed their sick, charging them at the same time that they should not make Him known. This union of beneficent activity with retiring humility and gentleness revealed to Matthew some features of the portrait that had been drawn six centuries before. The Evangelist with joyful reverence saw in the Blessed Redeemer the actual embodiment of that which God had inspired the seer to utter. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my Servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and

the smoking flax shall he not quench till he send forth judgment unto victory."[1]

Thus we know upon inspired authority that it is the meek and gracious Saviour Himself concerning whom our text makes the two-fold declaration which we now proceed to consider.

I. A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK.

1. The reed is an obscure and weak plant, whose chaffy husks and hollow stems seem unfit for much use, exposed to the danger of being flattened by the ponderous limbs of beasts of the field, of being trampled under the foot of the passer-by. Yet even the slim and arid stalk is fit for some purposes. It may be used as a measuring rod, or shaped into an arrow to fill the archer's quiver, into the pen of a ready writer, into the cunning instrument in a weaver's hand, or into the musical pipe vocal with sweet sounds. In itself it is thus a fit emblem of man fragile, inconstant, and obscure—"a reed shaken with the wind." Even in our bodily weakness, our exposure to danger, our inability to resist, our volatility, and our short-lived existence, we are not like the rooted cedar, the lofty palm, or the sturdy oak, but like the wavy reeds, and may appeal to God Himself not to destroy us, even as Job did when he said, "Wilt thou break a

[1] Matt. xii. 17, 20.

leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?[1]

But it is in our spiritual condition that we feel how helpless and inconsiderable we are. The insignificance of man has even been used as an argument against redemption itself, against the special purpose of God, against the incarnation of His Son, against the election of Israel, against the value of prayer, against anything personal, gracious and peculiar in the work of the Holy Spirit, and against the possibility of that experience of God's love which many of you regard as the most certain as well as the most delightful fact in your consciousness. It is forgotten that mere bulk, quantity, mass is nothing to Him who measures things by other than a material standard, whose perfections are truth, purity, love, and goodness are infinite, and whose glory shines in His condescension, in His inexhaustible mercy towards the children of men. It is also forgotten that His government is that of individuals, and that in estimating their worth, the accidents of birth, talent, wealth, position, and influence are of no account at all. He who sees every reed in a whole marsh standing erect, or bending beneath the wind, knows every one of us, and His interest embraces all the sons of men. Vagueness, gener-

[1] Job xiii. 25.

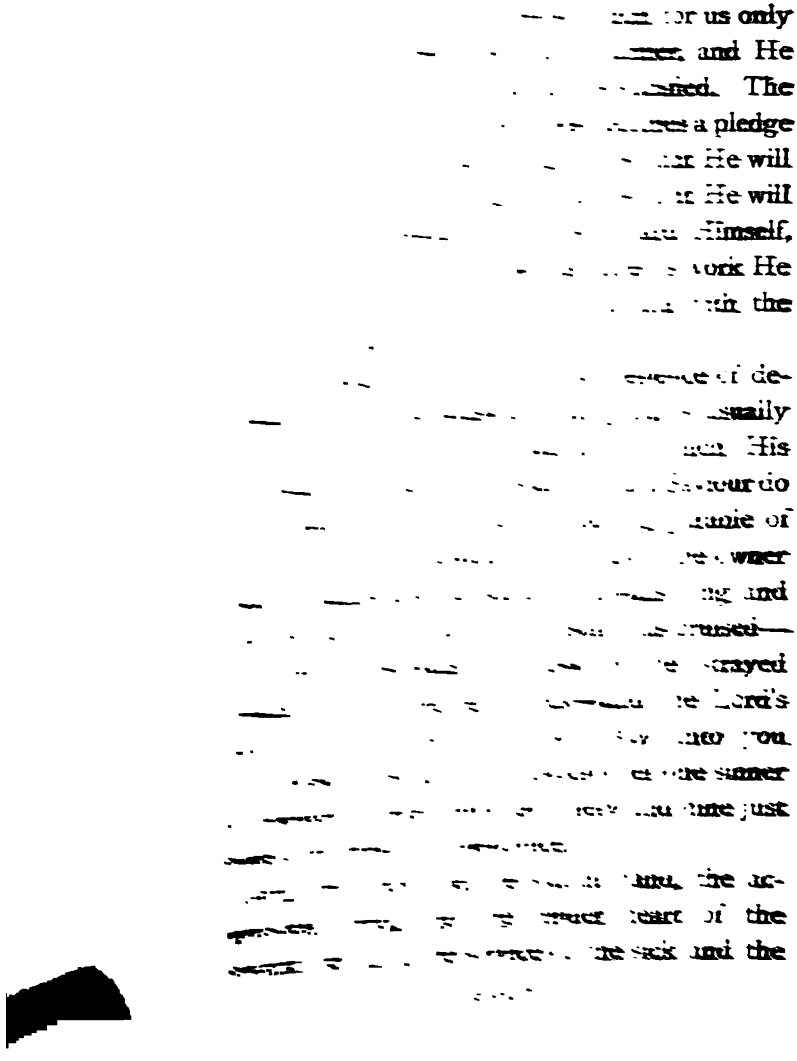
ality, and indefiniteness are human; but precision, clearness, perfect knowledge of each individual, are divine. The perfection of physical laws is their universality, that of the benevolent affections is their particularity; so that even we ourselves may understand that our interest, when it is worthy of the name, takes hold of persons, and is warm, generous, and lasting, just in proportion as it is individualising. General laws, aggregate results, philosophical conceptions, and nebular theories of universal philanthropy, will never satisfy man's heart; and what we find to be a necessity of our own nature, in order to give us rest and ardour in our affection, we believe to be in Him who seeks individual souls as His home and His reward.

Now, this is just what we are taught in the ministry of Christ. He did not despise the reeds. Much of His time was devoted to separate dealing with individual souls irrespective of their outward position, and none could feel in coming to Him that He was impatient of them, or disregarded them, or held them as beneath His notice. His command is—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." His promise is—"Fear not, little flock." Some of His deepest doctrines were delivered to single persons, *e.g.*, to Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria. He made special revelations of Himself to Mary, Peter, and the two

[redacted] This principle which He [redacted] personal ministry on earth gives [redacted] intercession now in heaven, in [redacted] separately presenting our [redacted] conveying [redacted] token of His tender [redacted] say [redacted] great [redacted] character, [redacted] which

[redacted] not [redacted] [redacted] we are all [redacted] [redacted] Spirit [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

viction, Christ will not allow the anguish to deepen into despair. While the guilt, the pollution, the helplessness, and the shame are ours, the healing and the strength are His, and the inner sorrow has a voice for the compassionate Saviour that never fails to touch His sympathy and to arrest His regard. His hand, instead of breaking, will support the drooping reed, and sustain the soul in its painful searchings, its convictions, and its helpless desires. Nor need we wonder that bruised reeds should receive from His favour so tender a treatment. He assumed our nature that He might redeem us. His coming was for the very purpose of seeking and saving the lost. His agony in the garden, the travail of His soul, the pain of His body, and the shame of Calvary, were endured for them. "He was bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions." And, brethren, whether you regard the work of Christ as a judicial satisfaction, as a governmental manifestation of righteousness, as an embodiment of love, as a creative example of self-sacrifice, or as a true, perfect, and complete expiation of sin by means of a vicarious offering, it is easy to see that the atoning sufferings of the Lamb of God constitute a ground of merit on which we can stand, and that these sufferings form a bond of union between Him and us, which draws Him to us in our guilt and misery,



wounded, while he forgets for a time them that are whole. The sight of a stooping frame, of a hollow cheek, of a wasted form, of a dangerous wound, or of a tortured nerve, appeals at once to his compassion and his skill, and his interest in the patient grows into a tender and personal regard. And as we look at our own bruises and pains, our diseases and sicknesses, we may ask with eager earnestness, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no Physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"[1] And the answer comes back, "He himself bare our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows." "His name shall be called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins."

Although the evils inflicted by sin are the only deadly wounds, and these also He heals, yet in the conflict that succeeds, the tempter is continually seeking to maim, disable, and destroy us. There are secret bruises known only to the Redeemer,—injuries received in the struggle, the effects of sore temptation, which it is his delight to heal. The bruised reed, if it be a mark against which Satan directs his fiery darts, is at the same time an object of interest, of compassion, and of watchful regard to the Saviour. He is able, and He is on the watch, to send the proper succour,—strength to withstand the temptation, consolation under it, and deliverance from it.

[1] Jer. viii. 22.

perversion and confusion, is yet "the candle of the Lord." He, therefore, who is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, will not dim or smother it, though it emit too often the dark and stifling smoke.

(2) There are instincts, cravings, aspirations after God, many of them unconscious, and some of them making themselves felt in sharp pain, and mental anguish. None of these will Christ quench. You may quench them yourselves. Many clip the wings of religious desire on which they might have soared to the throne of God, and then imprison it in the dungeon of their own heart, foul with every stain. Desires which in their origin were good and tended God-wards have often been repressed, perverted, and quenched, till nothing remained but grey ashes and sulphurous smoke. On the other hand, every natural feeling, every ingenuous aspiration, every spiritual want is met and cherished by Christ, who will no more quench the smoking flax than He will break the bruised reed.

(3) Grace is weak in its beginning, and is even mixed with corruption. In itself it has no mixture, and no darkness at all; and the more directly, simply, and personally we deal with the Saviour the purer will be the life we live in the flesh. As it comes from the firmament water is clear, but as it percolates through rocks, flows in beds of stone, is

distilled by the silent forces of nature from the mighty glacier, or is tinctured by the alluvial deposits washed by mountain streams, it takes the colour of the medium through which it passes. So grace itself is modified by the heart that receives it, by peculiarities of temperament, by predisposition, and by individual experience; and so far there is nothing to blame, but much to admire in the rich variety of Christian character. Yet unhappily our remaining corruption is like a discolouring element in water, like smoke hindering the native brightness of Divine grace. It is the smoke that is the evil—obscuring our vision, filling the air with unwholesome particles, tarnishing our character, and repelling others from the sphere of our influence.

(4) Sometimes grace is so sickly that it is ready to expire—knowledge is dim—faith is feeble—the lamp of hope burns low—our moisture is turned into the drought of summer—and foul air issuing from the bottomless pit, like fire-damp in a mine, threatens utter destruction. Still even in such a case, if it be real knowledge, faith, and hope, He will not quench the heavenly spark; but will turn the dying embers into a living fire, the smoking flax into a burning lamp.

An exquisite instance we have in the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The sympathy of the Stranger, His kindness of manner,

the confidence inspired by His friendly greeting, His deep insight into the word of God, His searching questions, His patience with them in their dark perplexity, and the purity and elevation of His discourse revived their faith, rekindled their affection, and awakened new hope in their souls. When the short journey was over they invited Him to their lodging, nay, used urgent entreaty and constraint—"Abide with us, for it is toward evening." It was no Stranger after all they had met, but Him whom their soul loved. They who were before sad, and widowed, and desolate, had found their friend, their beloved. They held Him and would not let Him ago. The lesson is a practical one. So should we seek to respond with ardent love to the gentle and gracious cherishing of the Redeemer when He comes to rekindle the all but extinguished flame of spiritual affections. There are some of you who will need no argument except that of your remembered experience to urge the Saviour to "abide with you." Yet as a practical counsel let me say to any less experienced, who are entangled in doubts, Go to Jesus himself, ask Him to abide with you and to lead you into all truth. Reasoning, reading, conversation, long-continued and painful thought, will not lift you above the gloom and misery of your condition. Pray to the faithful and true Witness, the living and glorified Saviour; ask Him to be

your teacher, your companion, your friend; and even a brief period of real fellowship with Him will revive the flickering spark of faith and love, and foster it to an undying flame. For when it is said of Him, "The smoking flax shall he not quench," it is added, "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

XII.

CHRIST PREPARING A PLACE FOR US.[1]

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John, xiv. 2-3.

OUR Lord's discourses which it was the peculiar glory of John to record are deeper, more spiritual, more intimate in their relations, and if we may without presumption compare one part of our Lord's words with another, more heavenly in their tone than are the discourses found in the synoptic gospels. I believe that this feature has served a high purpose in testing the hearts of men. Unbelievers approaching this gospel for critical ends have condemned it for what they regard as its abstruse, metaphysical, esoteric, and incomprehensible character, and are never wearied of contrasting its "Neo-platonic subtleties" with the directness, the healthy vigour, and the ethical force of the Sermon on the Mount, and of other discourses

[1] Last Communion Sermon in Free West Church, Glasgow, 7th April, 1878.

to be found in the writings of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Such criticism, however honest, proceeds from a want of insight into the essence of Divine revelation, and from the absence of that moral sympathy with the writer which comes from experience of the truth and living communion with the person of the Son of God.

The discourses reported in this gospel have a unity, depth, richness, and elevation which are the marks of heavenly wisdom, while the simplicity of the language in unfolding the most profound truths, and the child-like tone in describing the bright hope of eternal glory, strike the pure in heart with the impress of divinity. Specially it is so in the Lord's farewell discourses. His relation to the Father—the coming of the Holy Ghost—the possession of peace and joy—victory over the world—present fellowship with Himself—and an abundant entrance into glory—are presented in simple words, with the most tender affection, in the familiarity of a friendly intercourse, and with the deepening solemnity of a voice which was soon to be silent in the grave. Seeing the concern that was on the faces of His followers, and knowing their solicitude and fears, He said, "Let not your hearts be troubled." Going to the root of their sorrow in the unbelief which was still working in them, with such damage to their character and comfort, He added, "Ye be-

lieve in God; believe also in me." He proceeds to give them ground for confidence in Him by a new revelation of heaven under the conception of His Father's house with many mansions, and appeals to their own experience of Himself, of His truth, and of His goodness, making His very silence an argument for the certainty of the coming glory. "If it were not so I would have told you."

And then come the words which I have chosen as the subject of our meditation before we sit down at the table of our Lord. Let us follow the two thoughts presented in the words. 1. Our Lord's departure to prepare a place for us. 2. His return to receive us to Himself.

I.—HIS DEPARTURE TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR US.

The image or figure is taken from the case of a company of travellers towards a common destination, one of whom undertakes to go before to the place where they propose to have refreshment and rest. His object is to provide suitable accommodation, and to have everything in such readiness for their reception when they arrive, that they shall have nothing to do but to sit down and enjoy the repose and the comfort which, without any concern of theirs, the thoughtful activity of their friend has provided for them.

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The bodies of Enoch and of Elijah and the glorified body of the risen Saviour have some local sphere. The analogy of man's primitive condition affords a presumption in favour of Heaven being a place. We have also its figurative representations, such as "the new heavens and the new earth," with their noble amplitude, rich and manifold adornment, their adaptation to the necessities of redeemed humanity, and their fresh and undecaying splendour. Many of you have been moved by the exquisite imagery of Scripture regarding the better country, and have thought of its beauty, its amenity, its rest, its perennial abundance, and its blessed inhabitants, while you strained your eyes to "see the king in his beauty and the land that is far off." Paradise would lose much of its charm were it to be thought of as only an aerial region, a shadowy figure, nothing more than a type of unbounded plenty and serene brightness and joy. I do not see how we could get the same instruction from the repeated declaration that it is a *city*, if we did not believe it to be a *place*. A city is the centre of intelligence, the school of science, the nurse of art, the emporium of commerce, the hearth of piety, and the defence of law. It suggests the idea of society in its noblest form, and if we add to these ideal conceptions the element of permanence —"a city which hath foundations, whose builder

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[illegible] ...PREPARED BY CHRIST.

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[illegible] ...the kingdom prepared for you
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[illegible] ...undefiled, and that fadeth
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[1] Matt. xxv. 34.

kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."[1]

The preparation intended may be regarded in different aspects.

(1) Clearly it had some relation to our Lord's death, by which the wall of partition between Heaven and earth was utterly removed. By those atoning sufferings also, the resurrection and ascension of the Redeemer were secured, in order to the preparation of the heavenly places. That death was the price with which He purchased our right of entrance into Heaven.

(2) Light is thrown on our text by a very solemn reference in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "It was necessary that the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices than these."[2] These words declare sin in us to be so defiling, that the bright abode of God, the unstained sanctuary, could not be opened for us, until it had been first purified with the cleansing blood of atonement by which right relations between God and man had been established. The uncreated Heaven, though itself pure and free from every stain, needed to be sanctified with the blood shed upon the cross, in order that God's loving manifestations might flow out to those who by their sin had forfeited His favour, and shut themselves out from His presence. The

[1] 1 Peter i. 4, 5. [2] Heb. ix. 23.

consequences of human guilt had to be averted—His wrath had to be appeased—His love had to find for itself a channel along which it might flow freely, and with joyful complacency in the reception of believing and regenerated sinners into His holy habitation; and as these ends were accomplished by the blood of Christ they formed part of that preparation.

(3) Then, there was a dedication by sacrifice. The covenant, the book of the law, and the tabernacle with its vessels, were purified with sacred dedication to the Divine service. So Christ "entered into heaven itself," to set apart, and to consecrate the abode of God to be a habitation for ever to His mystical body, brought by His mediatorial work into harmony with the holy angels. There is something very solemn and gracious in this priestly consecration of the heavenly places with the blood that had been offered as an atoning and expiatory sacrifice on Calvary. We often hear of the dedication of buildings and of places in a sense that answers no purpose but that of mere superstition. There is a true dedication, a setting apart of Heaven itself as the home of redeemed souls, the sanctuary of the Most High; and this by the precious blood of the great High Priest Himself.

(4) His own entrance into Heaven, and His perpetual appearing in the presence of God for us is

a fulfilment of this promise. The peculiar dignity of the Aaronic High Priest consisted in his sole prerogative to enter into the typical holy of holies, which was a figure of the true. So Christ entered into Heaven as into a temple, and His sacerdotal appearance in that temple, while having many results has this among the rest, that He stands as our representative and surety in the immediate presence of His Father and ours. Not only is He who ministers in the sanctuary a Priest but it is as a Priest He stands there. His appearing there rests upon the presentation of His sacrifice, and assumes its reality, efficacy, and acceptance. It is the result of the redemption He has accomplished. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now come I to thee." It is the appropriate reward of His obedience unto death. And there must be a preparatory validity in the appearing of Him, who after "He had overcome the sharpness of death, did open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

(5) The character in which He appears in Heaven gives a preparatory value to His work there. He takes possession of it in our name, and on our behalf. We are identified with Him in His entire mediatorial work—His righteousness is ours—His death is ours—in His resurrection we rose—with Him we ascended to the right hand of God—we sit

together with Him in the heavenly places. He is the "forerunner who is for us entered within the veil."[1] And it is probable that this title was suggested by the words of Jesus in our text, rather than by the rites of the ancient worship. The Hebrew High Priest was a representative of the people, but he was not their forerunner. After slaying in the outer court, first the bullock of the sin-offering for himself and his house, and then the goat of the sin-offering for the congregation of Israel, he entered into the typical holy of holies with the blood of the sacrificial victims on his own behalf and on that of the people. In like manner Jesus after His atoning death entered into Heaven itself, to perfect His work of mediation. But this was not all. He entered as the head of His redeemed to prepare a place, and to open a way for those who are destined to be forever with Him where He is. The forerunner, precursor, harbinger is sometimes inferior to those who come after; but in this instance, He is the person in whose hand lies the whole business, its successful conduct and happy issues. His assumption of this office, and discharge of its duties became necessary because no other could undertake them.

[1] ὅπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς. The omission of the article places πρόδρομος in the situation of predicate, and ought to be read—"Whither as forerunner Jesus for our sakes entered in"—Heb. vi. 20.

It needed One infinite in majesty, perfect in righteousness, unsullied as the pure heaven itself, and yet in indissoluble union with humanity, to become the Forerunner of the many sons whom He is bringing to glory. And such is the peerless excellency of our Redeemer and Lord that He is able to be our Forerunner. In these last discourses He proclaims the glad tidings of immortal blessedness, and His own personal entrance was a triumphant declaration that he had discharged His original engagement for the salvation of His people under the Old Testament, and for that of all the elect who were to follow Him in their successive generations. In securing our present access into the holiest of all by the new and living way He is giving the assurance of His being there, of our acceptance in Him, of the efficacy of our prayers, and of His Father's delight in us. He has taken possession of the inheritance He purchased with His blood in their name, and hence the dignity of our rank and its security—"Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."[1] It was when He was last in their company as a man among men, and just at the point when He was about to become invisible to mortal eye, that he uttered these words which I trust may take a deep hold upon your minds this morning. He wanted to impress all his disciples with the truth,

[1] Rom. viii 17.

that He would continue to be their friend, although they did not see Him, and that He had the office of Forerunner to fulfil when He should depart out of their sight. He had been in Heaven before, He was about to be there again, but never before had He been there in the same capacity. He is the sovereign proprietor of Heaven—the glory of the place; but He is there now as the sublime guarantee that His followers shall come thither also.

II.—His reception of us to Himself. "I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also."

The Lord's "coming again" is spoken of under the form of a promise, which is the exclusive portion of His own followers, and is an event which has many degrees of distance, and many stages. In this very chapter the expression is applied to His coming in the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, who should both represent Him in His living efficacy to His people, and convey Him to their hearts as the indwelling principle of their spiritual life. And even earlier than the descent of the Spirit did He come, for His resurrection was the initial and germinal fulfilment of the promise, "A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me."[1] This

[1] John xvi. 16.

is a promise which sets forth spiritual and eternal truth rather than chronological combinations, while it is also an illustration of what has been happily called "the perspective of prophecy." Manifold and various is the coming of the Living One. He is ever present, ever active, and wherever He works, He comes.

The gift of the Spirit, by whom a close and indissoluble union is formed between the believer and the person of the glorified Saviour, is the initial coming of Christ, and also the earnest of our admission to His presence. If He has thus come to us, we shall know the reality of His resurrection, His life in Heaven, and of His appearing "the second time without sin unto salvation." Still in this particular instance I take the promise to be personal and individual.

(1) He comes to receive His people to Himself at death.

Every one must have noticed how little the New Testament says about death, and how often, and with what a tone of triumph it presents the coming of the Lord as the real object of our hope and joy. It would not be acceptable to any thoughtful mind if I were to say anything to diminish the solemnity with which every one of us ought to regard death. Its mystery, its loneliness, its awfulness, and its finality invest it with terrors, which make the

stoutest hearts shake, and some through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage. The intense reality of the Old Testament shows itself in the way in which it regards death. To Old Testament believers the idea of immortality was implied in the necessity of a post-mundane life as the seminal principle of all piety, in the conception of God as the Living One and the Saviour of His people. It was an idea present to the brooding thoughts of that Faith's best representatives, and dear to the experience of those who lived nearest God. Yet it was not so clearly revealed to them as it has been to us. There are economies which prove the wisdom of God, who determines the epochs, the quality, and the measure of His revelations. "The juice which is acrid in March is mellow and delicate in July." To the saints of the ancient dispensation the future was shrouded in shadows. Death was portentous, and in the absence of the clearer light which we enjoy — before the death and revival of Him, who is the first-begotten from the dead — before His triumphal entrance into His Father's house to prepare a place for us — no wonder that such touching sadness as rests upon deep thoughtfulness and true feeling, should find expression in the Psalms. "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise

thee?[1] "Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?"[2] Perhaps there are some of us who think too little about death. Voices of business, passion, art, amusement, sin, drown the voice of conscience.

> "We see all sights from pole to pole,
> And glance, and rush, and bustle by,
> And never dare possess our soul
> Before we die."
>
> *Matthew Arnold.*

Death in itself is not a thing to be desired, is not a state of joy: and so even Old Testament saints had their moments of fear, and their sense of bondage. It is wholly different with us, for whom Christ has gone to prepare a place, and whom He will come to receive unto Himself. The external circumstances of our departure may be left safely in His hands, and the time, the manner, the accompaniments, the state of our body, and the frame of our spirit, will be regulated not by the impact of an adamantine necessity, nor by the efforts of our own minds, but by the wise, loving, and unchanging will of our immortal Friend, "who will come again, and receive us unto himself."

A few years after His departure, a follower of His, a man of high intelligence and angelic purity, stood before the Jewish Sanhedrim and was con-

[1] Ps. lxxxviii. 10. [2] Ps. lxxxix. 47.

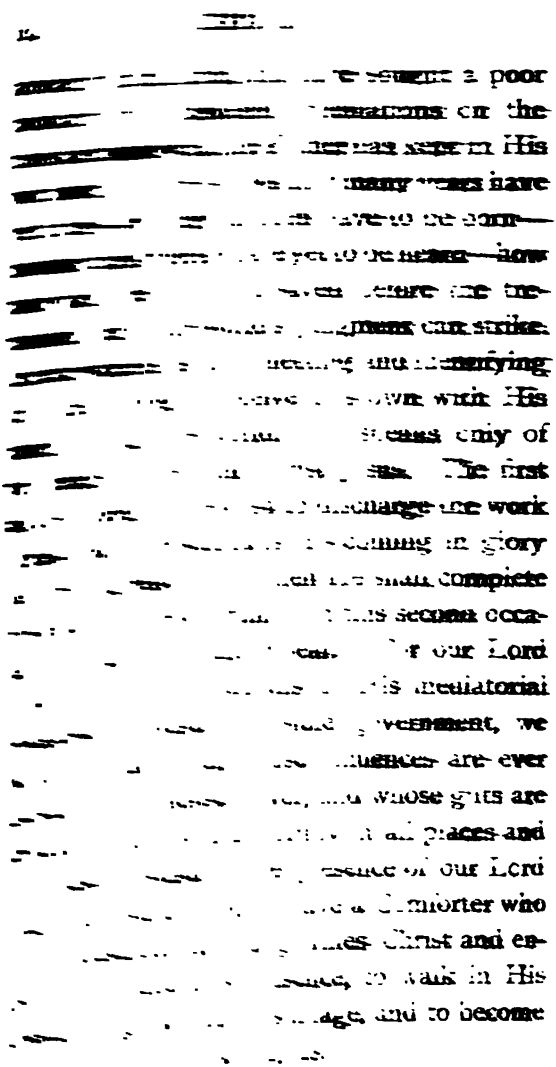
demned to death. When his body was being destroyed by the cruel, murderous stones, he lifted up his eyes and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and in uttering this dying commendation, the short, sharp agony was gone. Earth, and earth's toil, the gnashing teeth and fierce faces of foes, and the last pangs of mortal pain were forgotten on his entrance into the joy of his Lord. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." How simple the words! How deep the reality they express! How they destroy fear, awaken hope, direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ! And as they tell us that the crisis of dissolution is the epiphany of the Lord, as they lead our thoughts on to an entrance into His kingdom, an admission into His Father's house, a reception into His own joy, when we believe them, and make them our own, there is no height of confidence to which we may not rise. We also shall have a "desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." And such too is the consolation offered to you, who during the past months have mourned the departure of dear friends. At first your grief absorbed you, and left you no strength for higher thoughts. But you are beginning to dwell with grateful memory upon their holy character, and to think upon their unmingled, everlasting joy. They have had a wonderful reception from Christ. They

are where He is. They see His face, and are for ever with the Lord.

(2) There is another coming, still more glorious, and I would not break the continuity of the individual reference by enlarging it into its full and universal import. Let us still think of His second appearing in its bearing upon ourselves. Its outward magnificence is of less moment than its spiritual and personal relations. Oh! let us look beyond death to the time "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."[1]

His own teaching was that His second coming was not at hand. "While the bridegroom tarried."[2] "If he (their Lord) shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."[3] It is strange that men professing to receive the word of God should speculate in matters too high for them. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven but my Father only."[4] The apostles did not believe that day at hand—they did not expect him to come during their life-time. Our Lord opposes this heavenly, this angelic, this apostolic ignorance of the day and hour, to the arrogant presumption of those men who have ever and anon been

[1] 2 Thes. ii. 10.
[2] Matt. xxv. 5.
[3] Luke xii. 38.
[4] Matt. xxiv. 36.



meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. But the time is coming when the veil which now hides Him shall be withdrawn, and when He shall "appear" in visible majesty and with luminous and transforming brightness, and all this has personal reference to believers themselves. There is a sense in which that glorious future event has a close bearing upon our individual faith, for it is "unto them that look for Him He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Let us be of those that "look for Him." While we are now receiving the gifts and promises which as tokens of His love He has bequeathed to the Church, and while we worship Him as our redeeming God, "who has gone up with a shout," let us remember that He will not be hid for ever, but that as surely as He was received up into glory, so shall He come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also.

PRESENT-DAY PAPERS.

I.

CHRISTIANITY IN ITS RELATIONS TO THE PRESENT AGE.[1]

THERE is a natural tendency to exaggerate the importance of our own times as compared with other eras in the history of the Church and the world. This is the case, whether we regard them as incomparably good, or as bad beyond all precedent. We have also a fondness for hasty generalisations, for resolute opinions, and for expressing our opinions with a violence not warranted by facts. Accordingly, it is not easy to look calmly at present-day problems with a desire only to reach the truth, and with comprehensive observation. Are those days of ours evil or good? Are the signs of the times ominous or auspicious? Are they fitted to

[1] Printed in the Reformed Presbyterian Magazine for June, 1866, as the Report on the Signs of the Times, laid before the Synod in May of that year. I have selected this and the following out of the reports prepared by Mr. Hamilton for nine consecutive years, as not depending for their interest upon reference to any special contemporary occurrence.—ED.

engender discouragement, or to inspire hope? Our answer to these questions will depend on many secondary considerations,—such as our natural temperament, our theological training, the views of our church, the tone and complexion of our spiritual life, the social atmosphere we breathe, and our opportunities of knowledge. There is, however, a general principle on which all ought to agree—a principle which at once unites and explains the conflicting phenomena of the moral and spiritual world. Everything in this sphere of trial and privation has a twofold aspect. Everything, although evil, may, through the grace of God, work to man's true end, and be overruled for his highest blessedness. Everything, although good, may, through contempt of His grace, work to the endless loss of that for which God created him. The concluding trial of the world is summed up to Daniel:—"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." As there is a blending of good and evil in the individual, so in the aggregate of the individuals in the nation or age. And we partake of the character of the age, of the "time-spirit," as the Germans call it; and on the other hand each one, of us like so many drops in the immense ocean, [illegible] to swell it. These facts are important

in warning against the danger of hasty conclusions; and they teach us also that we are responsible to some extent for the times we live in, and thus warn us against a selfish isolation, and against a spirit of self-righteousness, when we speak of the sins and temptations of our own days.

I. THE RELATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD TO THE ADVANCED THOUGHT OF THE DAY, is a subject demanding serious consideration.

We say "advanced thought"; for although there is much that is called thought which is retrograde, superficial, and worthless, it would be deeply sinful to deny to many of the fruits of intellectual research the name of advanced thought. And while the truth of Scripture has received fresh illustration from many of the results of philosophic and scientific activity, it is one of the saddest signs of the times that so many distinguished men, in almost every department of knowledge, expose themselves to the condemnation pronounced on primitive times, "The world by wisdom knew not God." There are some things peculiar to the relation between divine truth and advanced thought as it is seen at present. There is a desire and readiness to discuss religious questions, and to display the bearing of scientific knowledge on the Bible. The tone is often be-

coming; there is a glowing earnestness of feeling; the avowed object is not to deny the truth, but to make Christianity more intelligent, more humane, more cultured, more liberal, and to harmonise it with the discoveries of science, and with the enriching experience of the race. The character of the men, in many instances, recommends their views to ingenuous and inexperienced minds; for they are known to possess high and attractive excellencies, and to be capable of valuable service to their fellow-men. The danger in the last particular arises from the tendency so rooted in our nature to substitute natural virtues for the fruits of the Holy Spirit; and the sins of an age of intellectual refinement blind us the more because they are the more subtle.

The truth of Divine revelation has always been in conflict with unbelief, either in its indirect or in its more pronounced forms. Philosophy is peculiarly active in our time; and when men philosophise within the limits of consciousness, when they are animated by a pure desire for truth, when they are modest, cautious, and faithful in their researches, nothing but good can come to the revealed truth of God. There is an intrinsic nobleness in the study. It begets the love of truth for its own sake. It developes the mental activities as no other pursuit can do. It creates a disinterested attachment to

ideas; and in an age of shipbuilding, manufactures, and railways, it is a continual protest against materialism, and recalls us to the simple and lofty elements of our immortal nature. Moreover, a true psychology is the source of most delightful applications of the spiritual truth of God's word, and is of inconceivable value in confirming the mystery of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls of men. But just because its influence is of so high a degree, false premises in a psychological theory lead to dreadful results in theology, in ethics, in social life, and in individual character. It is not going beyond what is known among us to affirm that many of the modern objections to the evidences of Christianity, to miracles, to prayer, to the spiritual constitution of the Church, and to the saving doctrines of the Cross, have their ultimate ground in a widely diffused empirical idealism. If we deny the structural capabilities of the mind, and the doctrine of instinctive necessary beliefs as an inherent law of consciousness—if we hold that experience alone is the source of knowledge—that the senses and the logical understanding give us all that we possess—and that the whole business of philosophy is to collect historically the facts given to us by experience, to collate and generalise our own mental states, to study nature only for its application to practical issues,—then empiricism in philosophy

leads to expediency as the ground of morals, to positivism in science, to the virtual negation of the supernatural as transcending the limits of experience, and to a whole system of dogmas directly hostile to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. The logical issue of this psychological theory is the rejection of the supernatural at any cost; and hence the student of the Holy Scriptures, the witness for the word of God, the teacher of the Church, must regard as an enemy to the highest interests of the soul, those who begin by asserting the *impossibility* of the miraculous.

Nor less important is it to have a true conception of the universe in which we live, and of which we form a part. It is not easy to define what is included under the expression—"theory of the universe." But although the language is high sounding, it is expressive of a real idea. Every one has a general view or conception of the totality of things to which we ascribe the name of Universe. That conception includes his whole being and acquisitions. Mind and matter are in contact in every act of perception. Is mind another form of matter, and thought a secretion of the brain? Then we are reduced to nihilistic atheism. Is matter a coarser form of nervous or mental organisation? and are both mind and matter phenomenal modifications of one common substance?

Then we are involved in the abyssmal dream of a pantheism which is equally atheistic. And who that is acquainted with the current literature of the day, does not know that there is a subtle essence of unbelief pervading many of its forms? In treatises of philosophy, in manuals of science, in the more brilliant products of the imagination, in the practical discussions of politics, of human society, the one tendency or the other is too often painfully manifest. The last result of positivism is avowedly, "The re-organization of human society, without God or king, through the systematic worship of humanity." The possibility of the knowledge of God is thus denied; the miraculous is inconceivable. Against such a deadly, dismal creed, the primary energies of man, the mysterious springs of thought, affection, and will, the crushed instincts of the human soul rise in rebellion, and gladly listen for the voice from the excellent glory. The heart of man cries for God, the living God, and waits for His Son from heaven.

This is pre-eminently a scientific age. Men are absorbed in physical studies, and in their applications. Christianity can have no quarrel with science. On the contrary, all rejoice that science has extended its boundaries, that it is prosecuted with vigour, that its methods are so pure, and that its results are so splendid and manifold. How and by what steps science has advanced; by what patient

questioning and modest interpretation of nature; by what confidence in the truth of God, and in the majestic order of His works; through what darkness the torch of knowledge has been carried forward; from what masses of error the sands of truth have been gathered, are among the most interesting and instructive themes to which our minds can be turned. And in all the achievements that spring from clear, mathematical conceptions, from a comprehensive induction of facts, and from a reverential unveiling of the majesty of Him who created the heavens and the earth, the word of God can receive only confirmation and fulfilment. But when it is invoked in the name of infidelity, and when its expounders, on the hastiest and most evanescent data, rear difficulties in the way of faith; when they deny the scriptural account of creation, the unity of the race, the reality of miracle, the trustworthiness of the apostolic witnesses, the worth and efficacy of prayer, and the gracious and almighty providence of God, our Heavenly Father, we shall regard their claims frankly and freely enough, but very sternly indeed. We must remind them that they are not qualified to pronounce authoritatively on moral and spiritual truth; that absorption in physical studies tends to dim the finer vision of the soul; that the spheres of science and revelation are independent of one another; that

miracles rest on a deeper necessity, and obey a higher law than those with which they are acquainted; that the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy, dwells not only in the high and holy place, but with him also that is humble and contrite; that He has assured us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" and that in the central truths of the incarnation and resurrection of His only begotten and well-beloved Son we have the crowning and all-inclusive miracles of the everlasting gospel. Thus are we to defend ourselves against the oppositions of science, falsely so called. And on the other hand, we are to recognise all that is good in the spirit and real knowledge of these days. The Church ought to be willing to receive all the genuine facts which the inductive investigations of men are accumulating. She knows that the Creator of the heavens and the earth is the Word that was made flesh, by whom were all things created which are in heaven and on earth. She may have calm confidence in the ultimate reconciliation of all apparent inconsistencies and contradictions. Every science has been turned against the Word, and in every case fuller knowledge has shed fresh beauty on the inspired page. Let her cultivate and encourage the fullest, freest search into principles and laws, and let her employ

all the results of [illegible] enlarging our conceptions of the majesty and power of God. Whether [illegible] the material immensity of the earth, or the constitution of the sun and other heavenly bodies, [illegible] and enlarge our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The notion of [illegible] universally throughout existence of the correlation of forces, [illegible] conceptions of the [illegible] most distant regions of [illegible] planet; and these [illegible] influence on thinking men, if we [illegible] alone: and the Church [illegible] enrich her teaching by [illegible] the wonderful works of [illegible] law of causation, the vast [illegible] sequence of phenomena, [illegible] laws—instead of allowing [illegible] to paralyse the soul, [illegible] unbelief of the human [illegible] we are commanded in [illegible] of awakening holy [illegible] up your eyes on high, [illegible] created these things, that [illegible] number: he calleth them [illegible] greatness of his might, for that [illegible] faileth. Why sayest [illegible] Israel, my way is

hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God."

Notwithstanding the assaults directed against the revelation of the will of God in Scripture, the Church can regard the truth in its purity and fulness. If less value is attached to theories of inspiration, and greater caution is shown in dealing with its mysteries, there is a deepening, growing conviction, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are a supernatural revelation of the mind of the invisible God, and that the writers were supernaturally inspired by Him. Modern thought too often gives birth to views that tend to deny objective revelation altogether; but we reject all these, whether they come to us under the name of Christian consciousness, spiritual insight, religious intuition, or inner light. We maintain that the gift of inspiration is generically unlike the gifts of genius, of goodness, of human wisdom, and of the special grace of the spirit in the hearts of believers. Plenary inspiration, perfect truth, absolute infallibility, and divine authority, are the characters which the Church of God recognises in the lines of Holy Scripture, and she clings to it with unalterable attachment and trust. This is not inconsistent with the recognition of the human element. It is human, in so far as it was to close with the intellect and heart of man—human in its condescension and

sympathies—human in its marvellous adaptation to the individual features of the writers—while the light of God loses nothing of its heavenly purity because it was reflected back from human faces; but the Bible is the word of God that liveth and endureth for ever.

Progress is the watchword of modern life. And as we view of the magnificent creation of European and American civilisation, we may feel some complacency in the triumphs that have been achieved. The operation of industry, the progress of invention, the scientific investigations of science, the improvement of social habits, the diffusion of education, and the powerful movement towards the realisation of civil liberty are indications of true progress. But there is danger of applying this idea to a sphere and in a way in which it can lead only to disappointment and failure. While Christianity has the noblest promises of blessing for the whole race, it is on the individual that the blessing comes first; and it is through personal faith, holiness, and spirituality, that nations and tribes are to inherit the blessing. Even the progress to which we have referred is only as to things without us. But of ourselves, the greatest mystery of this creation, whose life of study of the angels, who were created in the likeness of God, what more do we know, what more than of the nature of the soul, of the laws of our

thought, of the life hid with Christ in God, of fellowship in the Spirit, and of the deeper realities of things eternal, by all the progress confessedly made in physical and social advancement? The Bible has reference to these spiritual realities, and it is presumptuous to seek for the same external development in revelation as in physical science. The Bible was progressive through two-thirds of the world's history, for 4000 years. During that long period rude nations became civilised, small tribes grew into mighty peoples, eastern empires waxed and waned. Its unity amid manifoldness is one of the evidences of its divinity; but it pleased the Lord to conclude the canon under the seal of His own spirit, and all saving doctrines are contained in the written Word. But while there is not to be progress in this sense, there is a true heavenly progress both in the individual and in the Church. As we grow in intelligence and spirituality our vision will be deeper, our knowledge of the truth more pure, more elevated, more transforming. The Bible itself reveals the law of growth. "We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord." "And where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"—liberty from error, darkness, and sin, liberty from the idols of the senses, from human leadership, from the narrow spirit of

civil powers has been gradually approaching its solution. This underlies the whole continental revolution against Papal rule; it is mixed up with the foreign policy of every Government; and a righteous, scriptural determination of this question might be regarded by us as the sign and not distant herald of millennial blessedness. If we judge by the efforts and subtle schemes of the priesthood, there is every reason to dread the revival of Papal pretensions in their worst and most offensive forms. We know that in this country they regard all the concessions that have been wrung out of the British Government as steps toward absolute supremacy, as pledges of increasing power, and as signs of approaching ascendancy. They claim supremacy as their prerogative; and if subtlety, watchfulness, pertinacity, want of conscience in the use of means, and unflagging perseverance, can realise their dreams, our most precious privileges are in imminent danger. But the same principle which seems to be favourable to their projects will prove radically fatal to their hopes, if the Protestant churches and people are true to themselves. The onward, upward movement to a fairer distribution of civil rights, must dissolve the bonds that have given to the priesthood so firm a grasp on the mind and conscience of their victims, and with increasing knowledge and political capacity there must be a

breaking down of the system on the side of its evil relations. And if the Churches of this country are filled with the spirit of power, and love, and zeal, they will be ready to avail themselves of the present opportunity of reaching their minds with the truth of the Word of God. The same movement will render Parliament more amenable to enlightened public opinion, and it will be impossible for rulers and legislators to act out of harmony with the wishes of the people. This is really one of the clearest things connected with the constitution under which we live. Everything depends upon the character, the principles, the convictions of the nation. We see that, for the purpose of carrying any measure, all that is needed is a parliamentary majority; and this lays us under the most solemn obligations to impregnate the nation with the principles of the word of God, to seek to promote that righteousness which alone exalteth a nation, to pray for wise senators, and to aim at bringing the whole legislative and executive functions of government into harmony with Divine truth, and into subjection to Messiah's headship over the nations.

But this feature of the day, though in some aspects pregnant with undeveloped good, has also its dangers. In our desire to see all classes have their just share of power, to have civil and

religious liberty fully realised, to have existing relations between the Church and the State placed on a Scriptural basis, there are temptations and tendencies to evil that need to be watched against. If there is a calm and moderate approach to justice in our civil affairs, there is also strongly marked a restlessness of control, an impatience of authority, a constant danger of liberty degenerating into licentiousness. This spirit of independence runs like a thread through all the complicated web of modern life. It is visible in the relations of parent and child, of master and servant, and of rulers and ruled. It is seen, too, in every department of mental research. Everywhere there is a tendency to break away from traditions we have inherited, and to launch forth upon the ocean of original discoveries. The Church must check and moderate this restlessness. Her own authority is called in question. This is partly owing to a violent and convulsive recoil from the blasphemous pretensions of the Church of Rome, and partly due to the remarkable activity of the human mind. Free thought has its evils; but what follows when thought is not free? And it is partly due to the divisions of the Church herself. But it is the fact. There is a disposition to deny the authority of the Church of Christ. This is in harmony with the predictions of Scripture. "Because iniquity—law-

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her efficiency, her perpetuity, her material resources, are in no way dependent on the State. But without Christianity—and here we prefer the word "Christianity" to "Church," because this latter expression has been too much employed for some particular organisation of the Christian religion—the corporate life of the nation becomes desecrated. Politics enter into morals, and morals are based on religion. Civilisation is the product of the Gospel. The State needs the Church to create for her a conscience, to sow in her the seeds of knowledge, of reverence for law, of obedience, to teach her how to legislate for marriage, for the Lord's Day, and for education, to protect her from the deadly lusts which would destroy her, and from the consequences of her own despair. Nor is this all. The State —civil government—is a moral ordinance of God, and is under law to Christ. In whatever way society is to manifest this moral subjection, it must be vital and real; for the crown rights of the Prince of the kings of the earth are not empty claims. His mediatorial kingly rule will issue in the kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven being given to the saints of the Most High. While making allowance for the practical difficulties of statesmen, who have to deal with evanescent combinations of circumstances, which are never precisely repeated in history, and with minds operating upon,

of our country is the theme of constant adulation. Our institutions, our material prosperity, our commerce, our manufactures, the vastness of our empire, our inexhaustible resources, our insular position as guarding us from an invading foe, our laws, government, and political freedom, are made the objects of excessive trust. For all these good gifts it becomes us to be thankful, and for gifts infinitely more precious; but let us not worship wealth, and power, and glory. The warnings of ancient prophecy ought not to be forgotten. "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good."[1]

The *desire for comfort* is another powerful influence in modern society. Some may consider this hardly reconcileable with the earnestness of the day: both are signs of the times. The growth of wealth has fostered a desire for having everything pleasant and agreeable, for concealing the evil, for grasping the goodly promise, for freedom of movement, for gaiety of spirit, for pomp and splendour, for a soft, luxurious, and self-pleasing life. Most needful is it

[1] Ezekiel xvi. 48-50.

for us to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to take to ourselves the whole armour of God, and to prove that believers have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; that they always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in their body. In too many instances Christians conform to the world in vanity and display, in rivalry to be among the first in the splendour of their houses, in the sumptuousness of their entertainments, in their expensive tastes, and in the round of fashion. The wealth of this country is enormous—a fact of which there are innumerable proofs. And it is pleasing to add that there are few things more worthy of thankful recognition than the commercial virtues displayed by our men of business—their energy, their enterprise, their integrity, and their honour. But we cannot overlook the temptations incident to a money-making age—self-indulgence, absorption in the things seen, and forgetfulness of God.

It is painful to dwell on the vices and crimes which disgrace our day. We do not say they are more numerous or more revolting than at other periods of our history, but they are of a magnitude and recur so frequently as to reveal that many of our fellow-men are still the slaves of the worst passions unbridled lust, implacable hatred,

and unrelenting cruelty. When we think of the drunkenness, the impurity, the blasphemy, the heathen darkness and despair which prevail to such an alarming extent among us,—of the wretched homes of so many of the labouring poor—of their brutalising anxieties, and of their coarse, disgusting vices—we have cause for the deepest sorrow and humiliation. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."[1]

Such are some considerations on the present age, contemplated from a Christian point of view, on the truth of God's word in relation to some of the aspects of advanced thought; the Christian church, encompassed by the political forces of the modern world; the followers of the Lord Jesus in an age possessing many virtues, but also marked by pride and vain glory, by self-indulgent enjoyment of the fruits of wealth, and by the rank abundance of coarse vice and hideous crime. And when we remember that all the evil that is in the world and in human hearts, is summed up in one head, and is directed by an invisible personality, swift, subtle, and irresistible, and that he has countless agents, we shall the better understand the vivid, thrilling words of the apostle, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

[1] Lam. iii. 22.

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."[1]

[1] Eph. vi. 12, 13.

II.

SUPERSTITION AND RATIONALISM.[1]

THE progress of events since our meeting last year has been marked both by their intrinsic importance and by the rapidity with which they have been accomplished. The German war which has effected so many changes in the relative position of the European nations, and in the disposition of their social forces; the evacuation of Rome by the French troops, which must be followed by the complete and irremediable destruction of the temporal power, and the dissolution of the compound personality of the Pontiff; the revival of some of the worst features of Romanism in the bosom of the Church of England; recent disturbances in Ireland, indicating the existence of chronic discontent in that unhappy country; and changes impending in the re-adjustment of political power—the full measure of which it is impossible to predict—present such a variety and complication, and are charged with such

[1] Report on The Signs of the Times for 1867.

great issues as to demand our most earnest consideration. The evolutions of Divine Providence reveal the majesty and wisdom as well as the goodness and constant watchfulness of the Most High, and are full of the most precious instruction to those who bring to the study of them spiritual intelligence, a living faith in God and a deep resignation to His holy will.

In looking nearer home, we are grieved to notice the open, dangerous, and rapid development of Ritualism in the Church of England. Ritualism, in itself, may be defined to be an attaching to [illegible] gestures, dress, and outward rites, an exaggerated importance or a doctrinal significance. The Ritualistic movement in England is characterized both by the corruption of the simplicity of worship and by the teaching of doctrines which are repugnant alike to the Holy Scriptures, and to a just interpretation of the articles of the Church. A large body of clergymen, consisting of 2000, according to the lowest estimate, and of 6000, according to the estimate of many, have avowed doctrines and inculcated practices of the most unscriptural kind. The ranks are compact, earnest, filled with a fixed purpose, possessing intellectual and moral prestige, and having in their ranks men of great self-devotion, and [illegible] of the most eloquent preachers of the [illegible] have powerful allies in all classes of

society, and able organs for the propagation of their opinions. Starting from the figment of apostolical succession, they maintain that the ministry is a priesthood in a special and peculiar sense; that men episcopally ordained are invested with the most awful functions, wielding at pleasure the powers of the world to come and exercising supernatural prerogatives. Everything connected with their office becomes invested with a sacredness. Their vestments are symbolic, and are designed to impose on the worshipper by their splendour. In reality, nothing can be more ridiculous. Milton said, in his day, that the ecclesiastical costume of the Anglican priests was borrowed from the Flamen's vestry, and Aaron's wardrobe. Even this is an exaggeration. The priestly robes, to which so much superstitious value is ascribed, are only a richer kind of the common garments worn by the Syrian peasant or the Roman gentlemen of early times. The *Alb* was simply a white tunic, the *Pall* a woollen coat, the *Cope* a waterproof, the *Chasuble* a smock frock, the *Surplice* an overcoat. It is strange that garments worn for decency or comeliness, or in order to give outward pomp to a procession, should in these days be invested with a sacramental and mystic significance. The whole arrangements for worship are histrionic, and adapted to minister to imaginative sensibility alone.

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teachers cultivate those gifts, in which their true power lies—personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, love for souls, power with God in prayer through the Great Mediator, aptness to teach, a cultivated intelligence, personal fidelity and zeal; for these are the marks of an office transmitted from the apostles, and seals of a Divine calling. Let the Christian people claim their own privileges as a royal priesthood, and they will reject with instinctive abhorrence the revival of the hateful doctrines of confession and absolution at the hands of an earthly minister.

There has long been a dislike in the English Church to the distinctive doctrines of the Reformation, more particularly to that of justification by faith. A large party have always admired Bellarmine more than Owen, and the leaven of error which was introduced soon after the Synod of Dort, insinuated itself into the Thirty-nine Articles. The middle way between the Popish and Protestant doctrines found an eloquent expositor in Dr. Newman, with whom Ritualists have greater sympathy than with the representatives of evangelical truth. We might expect a still farther development of these tendencies, and hence we find that high notions of sacramental efficacy prevail. Baptismal regeneration, the real presence in the Supper, a false Catholicity, and other errors, easily attach them-

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High Church party is numerous, and promulgates doctrines utterly destructive of the truths for teaching which it is supported by the State. The Broad Church, in its love for comprehension, in its desire for a liberal interpretation of the Articles and the Prayer Book, pleads for the largest toleration, so that the Church may embrace the whole nation, irrespective of doctrinal differences, and of the most violent antagonisms. The Evangelical party is unable to meet the present emergency. It has lost its ancient vigour and courage, and seems to prefer an alliance with the State rather than sever its connection with those from whom it is alienated in affection and belief. When its most distinguished lay representative affirms that notwithstanding its present degradation the Church of England is the only grand and effective bulwark of the Reformation in the land, he destroys the last ray of hope that anything great will come from those who ought to be the leaders against ritualism and infidelity. The Government has promised to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the ritualistic practices; but it would be idle to expect that the Houses of Parliament, composed almost entirely of Episcopalians, will effect any reformation. Much can be done by the piety of the Christian churches, by the faithful preaching of the Gospel, and by the manly independence of the nation. But

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...ress. The spear of the Roman soldier is ex-...nged for the polished shaft of the so-called ...ional liberty: but the crime is repeated amid ...complimentary cheers of modern savants, and the ...ery laughter of ladies of fashion. The Rational-...m which offers so formidable a barrier to the ...ogress of the kingdom of Christ is the product of ...o opposite, yet harmonious principles, or rather ...has two sides, the mystical and the scientific. The ...mer resolves all phenomena into manifestation ...the mind, and the mind itself into a modification ...the supreme mind, and so magnifies the value ...innate ideas, universal principles, and subjective ...tions, that man himself is regarded as the only ...existence on earth, and he only an efflux of the ...embracing spirit of the universe. The scientific, ...the other hand, arrogates to itself the name of ...ism. It declares itself to be the whole body of ...man knowledge. It treats all phenomena as sub-...to invariable laws, and rejects every inquiry ...final and primary causes. Given a few nerves, ...senses, and a few instincts, it promises to ...a complete human being, and to determine ...duty of the race. Its psychological basis is ...sm—an error which is radical and incurable. ...what we direct special attention to is that, ...the distinctive doctrines of the Cross are ...by a lofty mysticism, or by the coarser

forms of positive unbelief, the result is equally mischievous and deplorable. There lies in both the denial of the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, of the freedom of the will, and of the immortality of the soul. Life is stripped of its awful seriousness, and holy and gracious exercises are rendered impossible; for there is no place for a Personal Father, a Personal Saviour, and a Personal Spirit. The chief end of man is to study nature, to cultivate his own faculties, to obey law, to sustain himself by the ideal sympathy of the great characters in history, to die calmly, and to be resolved into some of the unknown forces of the universe.

We are blind indeed if we do not see that these views are pervading large masses of our fellowmen, and that they are producing bitter fruits. Minds of rare endowments, and capable of expressing their ideas in language of surpassing beauty, seem to have adopted opinions which contain the germs of untold evil. It is true that the proud illusions of the human intellect, in its aberrations from the fountain of all truth, are confronted by a thousand evidences of their unreality, drawn from history and experience; but the haughty assumptions of man contradict the data of consciousness, and mutilate the records of experience. For if the experience of the uniformity of nature be alleged against the supernatural facts of Christianity, we must assert the

...rience of the veracity of human testimony in ... circumstances in which the chosen witnesses ...ore their testimony. Nor must it be overlooked ... the reality of prayer, the certainty of the for... ...ness of sin, and the possession of a good hope ...ough grace, are amongst the most certain, as well ... the purest and the best, of the experiences of ...anity. But these are as consciously enjoyed ...believing men now, as at any former age of the ...urch, and it is most arrogant to affirm that they ...long to an incipient and puerile stage in the ...istory of the world. Penitent sinners at this day ...rn from the idols of the human understanding, of ...opular unbelief, and of human vanity, to serve the ...y true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, ... Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to ...

...nother feature of unbelief is its avowed enmity ... what it contemptuously calls dogmas and ...gmatic teaching, and its repudiation of any out... ... authority in matters of faith. Reason, it is ..., has condemned the principle of dogma in ...osophy, in politics, and in art. Religion must ...apt itself to the altered circumstances, and con... ...everything like an authoritative declaration ...ual, as being the stagnation, the imprisonment, ... paralysis of thought. There are many reasons ...opposing and refusing to accede to this im-

perious demand. Dislike to the form in which the truth is presented often springs from a distaste to the truth itself. Dogma is a necessity of our nature. The only question is—Whether we shall have true or false doctrine? To express our belief in the original guilt and depravity of our nature is to give utterance to a dogma; but the assertion that our nature is neither guilty nor depraved is also a dogma,—the only difference being, that, in our judgment, the former is a true doctrine, humbling indeed to our pride, very awful in its consequences, but most salutary as an instrument of repentance, and as making us willing to receive the Saviour; the latter is exposed to all the objections which can be urged against dogma as such, and possesses besides the incurable vice of being both false and dangerous. That the sinner is justified by faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a dogma; the denial of this is also a dogma. It is to be feared that the secret of this hostility to the dogmatic teaching of the Church springs from a desire to hold as open and unsettled, what the word of God has declared to be as firm as the everlasting hills or the unchanging stars. Nor does the reverent student find in accepting scriptural truth that he is being encased in a hard integument of mere opinion. It helps rather to regulate and purify his thoughts, just as the mathematician finds in the axioms which are the

base of his science the fixed principles which guide his onward progress, and not the petrifying barriers to throw him back. The only restraint which such teaching imposes on the human mind is, that it shall radiate around the centre of truth, and not lose itself in an abyss of darkness.

The objection is not entitled to greater respect when it is put as a contrast between so-called "dogma" and the beauty of a moral life. There is in reality no contrast between doctrine and life, but the closest affinity and the most friendly relations. Evangelical teaching is not, as its enemies insinuate, abstract, impractical, and devoid of spirituality. That there is a dead sea of orthodoxy, in which everything noble perishes, and that we are in danger of substituting a sound creed for a living faith, and outward privileges for personal holiness, is what the history of the Church painfully teaches; and against this fearful temptation we are warned with an earnestness, a solemnity, and an ardent desire for the conviction and purity of individual men, which is never equalled by those men who persist in misrepresenting and falsifying the work of the Church in this. While we admit the worth of virtue wherever it is found, we must affirm that the [illegible] doctrine lies at the foundation of spiritual existence both in the individual and in the [illegible] of conscience, disinterested

affection, unswerving devotion to the highest ends, and unwearied labour for the good of others, as well as the more secret and spiritual graces of character, are not only better secured by the principles and motives which are revealed in the Gospel, but they can be cultivated in no other way so as to bring forth fruit unto perfection. It is not to be denied that many who profess the purest forms of Christianity are criminally negligent, and even indifferent to the highest types of spiritual attainment, and that they readily conform to the world in its selfish and vain pursuits. But this must not be regarded as reflecting on the Gospel, nor as offering any just objection to its doctrinal teaching. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," is an expression of the most fundamental verity, and the ground of an ideal holiness, self-devotion, and progressive assimilation to the Divine image, which is impossible to fallen man except through union with Christ.

But with all its vaunted superiority to the narrowness of theology, this school of unbelief has doctrines of its own which are most ruinous to the souls of men. We believe in one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In opposition to this truth we have such unmeaning words as these—"The Deity is the category of the ideal"—"a *resumé* of the supra-sensuous needs of man." From whatever

point infidelity starts it ends in the denial of the personality of God, which is again the foundation of our faith and hope. It virtually denies the freedom of man also. But the truth which the Son of God came to reveal, and which He imparts to the soul by His spirit, is the only principle of liberty. Growing insight into the truth delivers from error and delusion: the reception of Him who is the Truth gives redemption from the curse of the law, and from all the bonds of legal terror: the indwelling of the spirit makes us free from the tyranny of a rebellious will, from the reign of lust, from subjection to the principalities and powers of darkness, and from the dominion of this present evil world. We have freedom to serve God, to run in the way of His commandments, and to enter into "the holiest of all." Political freedom is a blessing, liberty of thought is a blessing: but neither of them is to be compared with that inward and personal redemption which is the heritage of those who are bound to Christ by the royal law of liberty, and whose whole nature is being transformed after His image. "Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." But of all such heedlessness the treasure from which we are embezzling would deprive us. Nor are its teachings more hopeful with respect to immortality. Its disciples profess to believe in the pre-existence and immortality of matter, of

force, of thought, of moral beauty, and of the idealised human race. But that eternal life is the sure possession of redeemed souls, and that the glorified body will be raised by the almighty power of the Son of God, are verities as foreign to their thoughts as they would have been to the followers of Lucretius. Their hostility to everything distinctive and personal in the future glory of believers should awaken us to deeper persuasions of the reality and power of our Lord's resurrection. Men shrink from resigning themselves to the naked idea of absolute annihilation. The instinctive yearnings of the human soul—the ardent hopes or the glowing fears with which the approach of death is regarded —the unequal distribution of good and evil,—and some beautiful analogies drawn from nature and providence, have often been appealed to as the signs and foregleams of a life beyond death and the grave. But we require a foundation firmer and surer—a foundation of Divine promise, and of accomplished facts, and this is given to us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We do not linger to refer to the vehemence with which this fact is being assailed by all sections of the Rationalistic school. Let us be steadfast and unmoveable, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Let each of us realise vividly his own personal immortality. Mark also how the language in which the Holy Scriptures

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III.

CREEDS AND CREED-SUBSCRIPTION.[1]

WHATEVER view may be held regarding the essential character of our time, there is one aspect in which it may be described as an era of transition and vicissitude. The apparent inconsistencies of some of its most distinguished representatives reflect the mental struggles, and the desire for truth felt by men when they are most deeply interested in great questions. All systems of belief, all forms of government, the laws of civil polity, and the principles of social life, are at present undergoing a process of modification which must result either in marring the good that is in them, or in setting that good free from the evil, and so making it more pure, more stable, and more influential. Which of these opposite results is the more probable is a question

[1] Read at a Theological Club Meeting, December, 1877. This, unlike the two previous papers, had not the benefit of the author's revision and preparation for the printer. But though incomplete and fragmentary it is given as a specimen of his cautious yet candid treatment of pressing questions.—ED.

and more prevalent tendencies of the day are not against creeds and confessions. A superficial agitation must not be mistaken for a current whose depth and volume are immeasurable. If there is a disintegrating force in modern society, there is also a tendency of an opposite kind. The synthetic unity of human knowledge in successive periods is rapidly becoming one of the commonplaces of philosophical thought. It has been well said that "all philosophy worthy of the name must stand by the past, and can only make advances when it has thoroughly assimilated the treasures of the past; that the present is simply the past revealing itself, therefore must the philosopher beware of isolating the present."[1] These remarks find an apt illustration in the historical continuity of creeds. The same writer's additional warning to philosophers against what he happily calls "The isolation of the problem," is worthy of consideration by those who would seek to sever the confessional links which connect one generation of the church with another.

I. The disappearance of CREEDS is not so near as either their faithless friends dread or their foes desire. The truth is, there is a necessity for them—and this necessity may be seen from various sides. There is first what we might call a *theological* necessity for creeds. The existence of such a de-

[1] Professor Lindsay in "Mind," October, 1877.

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forth by the struggles in which creeds have been involved. These have given birth to a noble series of dogmatic writers who have enriched the Church with the wealth of their spiritual knowledge.

Then, there is a necessity for creeds arising out of the *nature of the Church.* The Church is not a philosophical institute whose highest function is literary culture, nor the natural organ for giving expression to vague religious aspiration—for teaching morality, and for securing obedience to civil authority. She is the pillar and ground of the truth, having a definite body of doctrine to exhibit, a distinct testimony to maintain, a message from God to deliver. Her witnessing character demands a creed. It does this as regards the world without, that what she holds from God may be known and testified of unto all. It does so no less as regards those within her own pale, that by her system of belief, by the power of sound doctrine she may instruct and build them up, mould and fashion them into Divine life.

This view, that creeds are necessary, is confirmed by the *history of the Church.* We see in it that they have all arisen out of the need of protest against error, or in the exigencies of controversy among the different sections of the church, Thus in the early ages we have the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the so-called Creed of Athanasius, sometimes

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reed ought to be the expression of *doctrinal* and an instrument for promoting it. I say, not uniformity. You cannot make men think . The constitution of their minds, their educa-, and their circumstances are too diverse for this. iat we must aim at is unity in variety, permanence ch variation. It is what nature teaches us to spect. Every plant, flower, and tree has freedom to ifold itself according to its own nature. Vege-able life is the same in every variety of product, in he moss, the rose, the cedar of Lebanon, and the kingly oak. So spiritual life cannot be restrained by barriers of words, it must over-run every formulary. Yet though thus manifold in form, it is in essence one and the same. Now one value of the study of symbology, or a comparative view of confessions, is just this, that it is fitted to promote our apprehension of unity in doctrine, and to be a

more strictly denominated Symbols. Since the Reformation we have the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent—the Augsburg Confession—the Helvetic Confessions (1st and 2nd)—the Heidelburg Catechism—the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England—the Articles of the Synod of Dort—the Westminster Standards, not to mention an immense variety of subordinate and explanatory formularies.

Here it is needful to remember that modern confessions differ in some important respects from the ancient creeds. These were the symbolical forms in which individual testimony was borne to the vital doctrines of revelation, whereas the "confessions" are Church documents, the bases of ecclesiastical fellowship, and the tests of orthodoxy applicable to ministers as expounders of the principles of particular branches of the one body of Christ. The ancient symbols were used very freely in the liturgical services of the Church as expressive of her adoration as well as of her belief. Confessions, on the other hand, belong rather to her didactic and witnessing functions, and are the relative standards of truth among her members, the monuments of past achievements, and the records of her triumphs over errors which are specified, confuted, and rejected in them. It is true that the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds enter into theological distinc-

tions respecting the interior relations of the Trinity, the Person of Christ, and the nature of the Incarnation, but neither of them possesses the copious and exhaustive fulness of Reformation symbolism. Principal Cunningham regrets that so inadequate and imperfect a summary of the leading principles of Christianity as the Apostles' Creed should have been exalted to a place of prominence in the worship of the Church. He considers this as having tended to the disregard of important articles of faith not embraced within that creed. In particular, he believes that to this cause may be traced the fact that the doctrines of grace were thrown into the background during several of the early centuries of the Church, and are still too often regarded with indifference in those communions where an undue importance is attached to this symbol.[1]

With regard to the authoritative documents of the Reformation Churches, it must be borne in mind that many and various as they seem,—real and vital as some differences in the Protestant Churches are, —for example, that between Calvinism and Arminianism—these confessions rest upon the ancient foundations; and while some of them are denominational and particular, the things in which they agree are at once far more numerous and far more vital than those in which they differ. A compara-

[1] See Prin. Cunningham's "Historical Theology," vol. I., p. 93.

instances of church discipline exercised on those who were guilty of departure from the faith.[1]

The Church in putting forth symbols has a certain right to be heard because of her Divine origin and commission. And a creed possessing the proper qualities embodies therefore a certain authority. That authority, however, is limited by such considerations as these: (1) It cannot enforce obedience by outward compulsion; (2) It is an authority strictly ministerial and subordinate to that of the Church's Head; (3) Itself must be tried by the rule of the infallible Word; (4) It must not over-ride the rights of conscience and personal freedom.

The great difficulty lies in harmonizing Church authority with the liberty of private judgment, ecclesiastical right with individual liberty, fixed dogma with independent study.

II. To proceed now, with the more precise question of CREED-SUBSCRIPTION,—it is well to bear in mind, as we consider it, the following distinctions:—

1. In signing a creed, confession, or formula, duty to Christ requires us to reserve our allegiance to Him as our Lord and Master. We cannot allow any subsequent considerations of consistency, professional honour, or the fear of man to weaken our

[1] 1 Tim. i. 20.

sense of supreme obligation to Himself. Our subscription to a particular symbol ought to be more than the surrender of individual opinion for the sake of a common good. It ought to be the expression of our loyalty to Christ. If so regarded, it will fall under the category of spiritual duty. When thus carried out, it will have the sovereign efficacy of an act of obedience to Him, and carry with it the power of making the conscience pure and tender, of keeping the mind open to new light whence-soever it may arise, of promoting the healthy action of our whole spiritual nature, and of excluding those unwholesome influences which are drawn from considerations of private interest or from the dread of secondary consequences. Regarding an act of subscription in light so high and holy as this, it will be found that we do not by performing it surrender the right of a free and fearless investigation of truth. For such right has been bestowed upon us by Christ himself, as an inalienable privilege which we are to use in subservience to His will and for His glory.

2. In subscribing to a symbol we do not accept every particular proposition in the creed, least of all the deductions, arguments, and collateral references contained in it. And why so? Because such a canon of interpretation would destroy the very ends for which subordinate standards exist,

only the rejection of a doctrine itself, which the Church has formulated as a whole in clear and unambiguous terms, not the rejection of inferences, of special points of view, of sectional interpretations, or of private opinions, which can be made the ground either of a judicial process or of ecclesiastical censure. It also follows that a logical inconsistency (whether real or apparent is not to the point) between one's opinions and his declared adherence to the confession ought not to form the ground of a charge of heresy. The inconsistency must be tantamount to a positive contradiction or denial ere such a charge can be lawfully pressed. Even when the inconsistency is tolerably apparent, other considerations will have their legitimate weight in the determination of the case, *e.g.* loyalty to truth, possession of spiritual gifts, proved capacity for serving the Christian cause on the part of the person against whom the charge is alleged. These things follow on a fair construction of our confessional position as a church. In point of fact our Confession and Formula are distinguished by a sober and reverent moderation, and are singularly free from extremes,—from the attempt to produce an iron uniformity in details on the one hand, and from opening the door to irresponsible licence on the other.

The spirit in which a church requires subscription

of her office-bearers—the manner in which she handles her creed as an instrument of discipline, are points of immense practical importance. Those which have been thus indicated as characterising our church may be regarded by some minds as tending to laxity,—but we believe that the very opposite is the fact. Such moderation is more conservative of everything really precious in our creeds, is more productive of real adherence to solemn public vows, is more likely to promote manly and generous confidence among brethren than the so-called faithfulness which—honest, sincere, and uncompromising though it may sometimes be—is apt to degenerate into a dull and lazy acquiescence varied by fits of violence. There must be a free play of criticism around all subordinate symbols of a church, not in the way of attack or disparagement, but rather to keep them pure and living. Creepers grow around an ancient tree, encircling the trunk, encumbering the boughs, and weaving themselves among the branches. A genuine criticism removes the parasites which absorb the juices, hide the fair proportions, and exclude the genial elements.

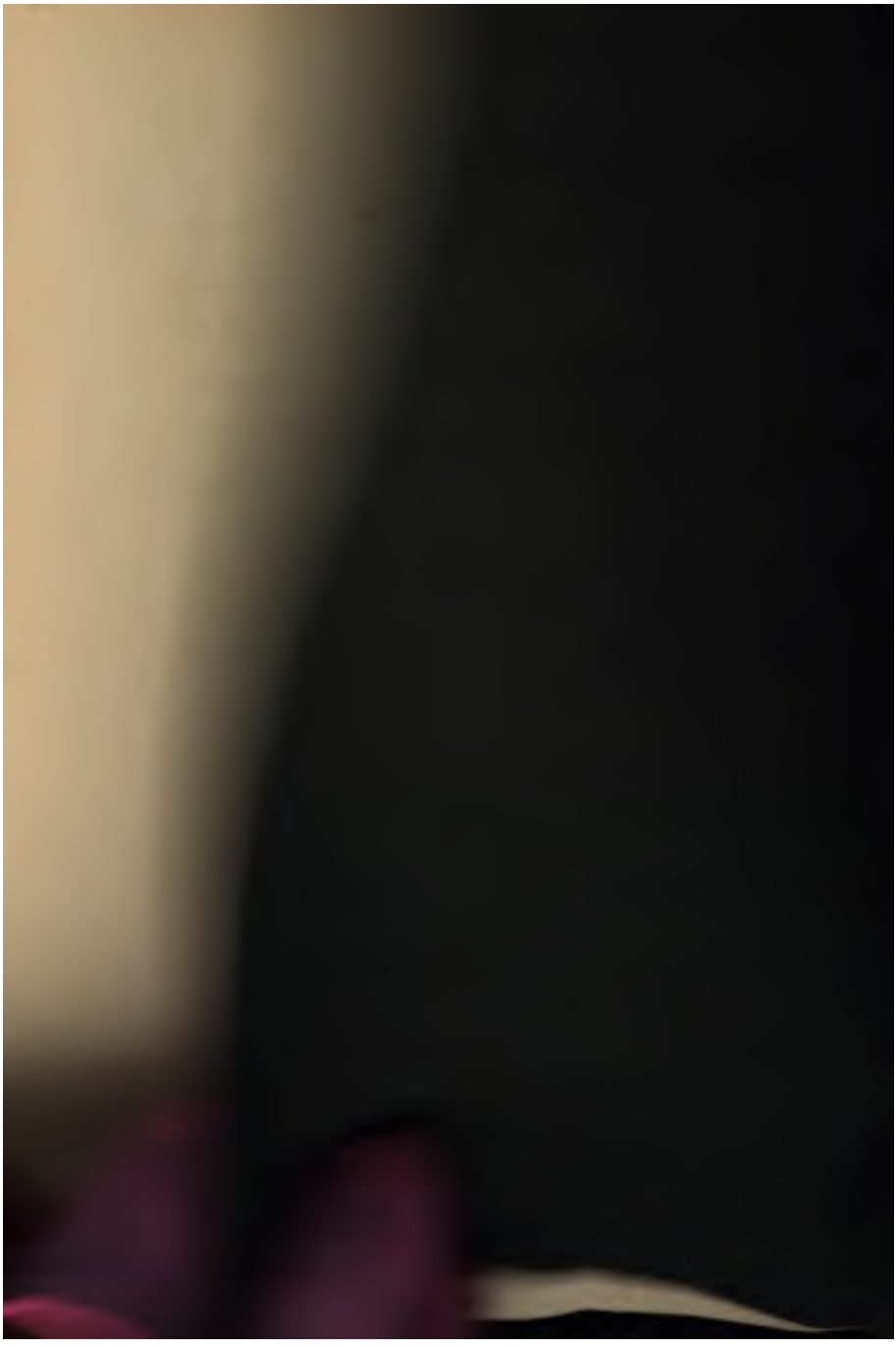
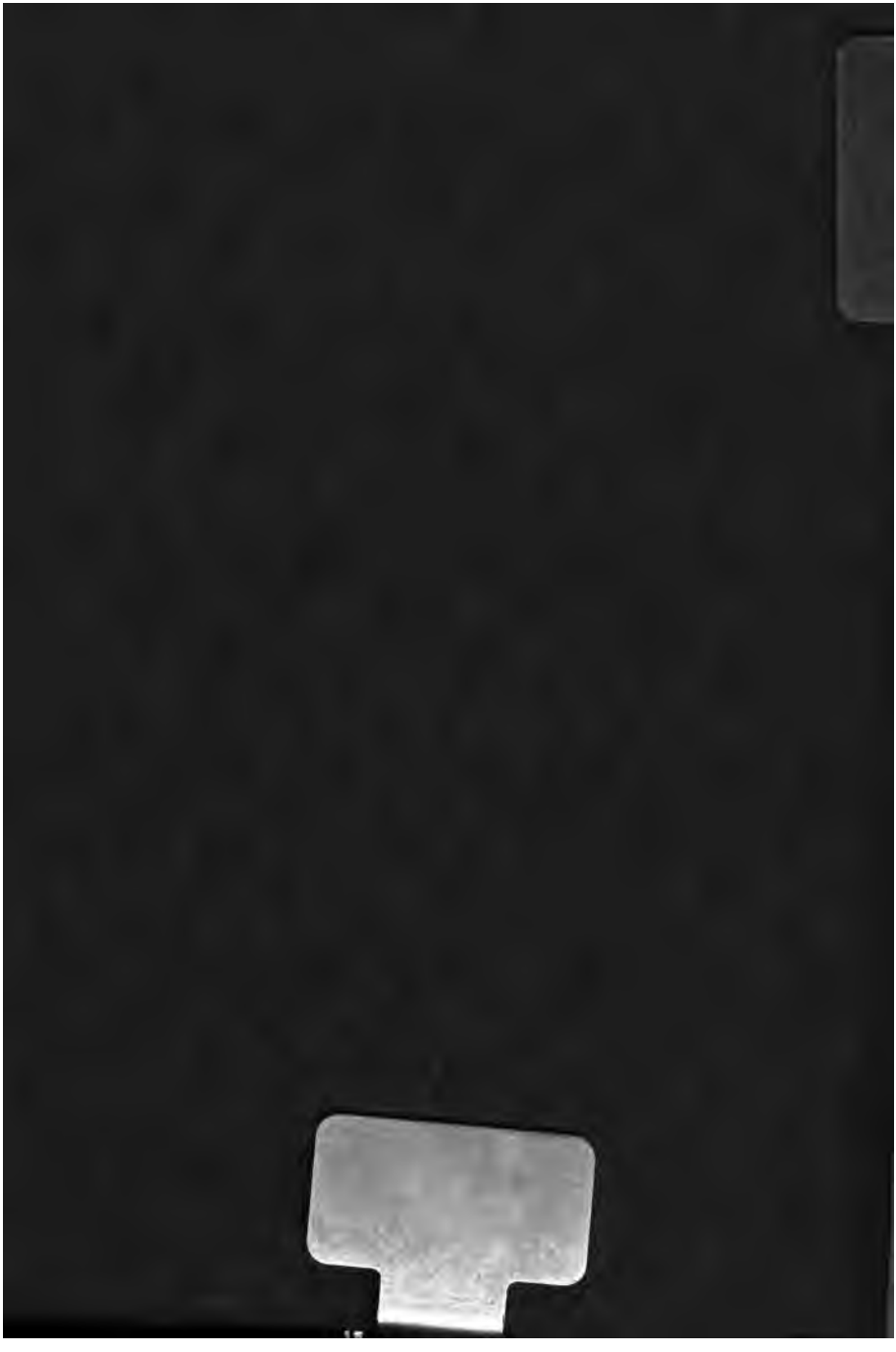
The particular point, when a true-hearted man finds that he is no longer in such agreement with them that he can consistently remain in the communion of which they are the symbols, must to a

large extent be left to himself—to be determined by him in the light of his duty to God, and of his desire to keep his own conscience pure. Instead of being eager to discover alleged discrepancies between the teaching of her ministers and her standards, the Church is bound to exercise a wise self-restraint, to discourage private inquiries, to be slow to move, and to resist firmly every attempt to create and foment panic. These things she will do if she has a real trust in her Living Head, and in His indwelling spirit. The morbid exaggeration which under the pretence of fidelity to Christ magnifies every difference of opinion into a departure from the truth, is a violation, not only of brotherly love, but of the ordination vows which every office-bearer has voluntarily sworn to hold inviolate.

3. In perfect harmony with these things I have no hesitation in condemning as wrong the nebulous and viewy conceit which regards adherence to a creed as nothing more than an approval of Christianity in general, a response to its animating spirit. It would be immoral for a man to profess a Calvinistic creed, while holding only the principles of Christianity common to it with the Socinian and Arminian systems. Every man is entitled to hold and to express his own convictions; but those who believe in the fact of the resurrection of the Son of God, and those who deny it, cannot subscribe the

[illegible] must be eliminated from [illegible] but the error is usually by the [illegible] [illegible] excludes every other [illegible] [illegible] with God, and stamps a distinctive character on the system in which the [illegible] [illegible], which renders it impossible [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Confessions [illegible] must be considered as simply articles of [illegible] [illegible] must be held inviolate, [illegible] [illegible] and vows and subscriptions [illegible] must be made from whose minds [illegible] [illegible] belief in the supernatural has [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] sad and disastrous, and [illegible] [illegible] most corrupting to public morals. [illegible] [illegible] professes to assimilate the spirit of [illegible] when it rejects its doctrines, its facts, [illegible] [illegible] as a revelation of the work of Christ [illegible] redemption, and everything that is specific [illegible] evangelical truth and distinctive in spiritual experience. The danger of liberty running into [illegible] is a real one. For the convulsive [illegible] from despotic authority, disgust at the pious [illegible] which have too often been imposed upon men in the name of compromise, impatience of the attempts made to stifle inquiry, may become [illegible] strong even in ingenuous minds, and lead them into serious aberrations. Sir William Hamilton says that scepticism and credulity have their origin in the

same cowardice, which refuses to look at facts; and it is significant that the same system which breeds superstition, and appears before the world as the incarnation of an intolerable spiritual despotism, should be identified in Scripture with the spirit of lawlessness.[1]

Common honesty, a regard for one's own integrity, an honourable recognition of the confidence which is the bond of all true fellowship, reverence for the authority of Christ, and the obligation of federal engagements require us to believe the system of doctrine we have embraced, to maintain it in its fulness, to defend it in every way consistent with the nature and limits of a confessional standard, and to transmit it unimpaired to those who shall come after us.

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 4.